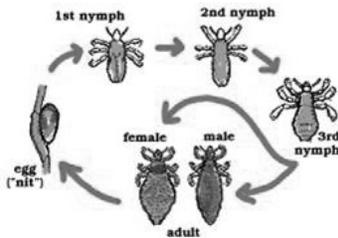


# The facts about head lice

## Life Cycle of Lice

- Only adult lice can crawl off the head
- Adult female glues the nits (eggs) to the hair strands.
- It then takes the nits 7-10 days to hatch.
- The nits hatch into mini adult lice called nymphs. Nymphs can't lay nits (eggs). They also stay on the head until they mature.
- It takes the nymphs 10-14 days to 'grow-up' before they are able to lay eggs.
- Once the nymph changes to an adult lice it can live on the head for about 20 days, laying 4 or more eggs a day.

The Life-Cycle of the Head Louse



## Checking for Nits:

- Nits are eggs of the adult lice and are much easier to find than the lice.
- They are very small about 1/3rd the size of a sesame seed.
- These silvery oval specks are "glued" very tightly to the hair strand and need to be pulled off with fingers or a fine tooth comb.
- They are found close to the scalp usually behind the ears and at the back of the neck.
- If found more than 1/4 inch away from the scalp it is probably an empty shell.
- Sometimes nits are mistaken for dandruff flakes. Nits don't flick off like dandruff.
- It takes 7-10 days for a nit to hatch. If you are combing out lice every 3-4 days for 2 weeks, only empty egg shells remain. Nit picking is not mandatory but highly recommended.

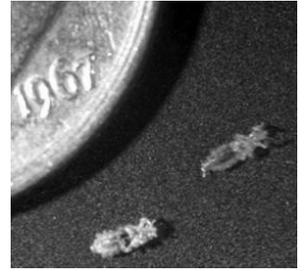
## Checking for Lice:

- Check for lice when the hair is wet with conditioner, because they are easily missed in dry hair.
- Lice are not able to move off the head until they are nearly full grown, which takes at least 7 days. **Children do not need to be excluded from school or daycare while wet combing is in process.**

## Treatment Options

Treat only those household members who are infested - treat all infested household members at the same time.

Treatment options B and C are more effective if done in combination with Option A Wet combing.



### OPTION A: HAIR CONDITIONER/WET COMBING

Wet combing is based on the following principles: Wet combing every 3-4 days breaks the life cycle of the louse by systematically removing the lice before they are full grown and able to reproduce or move to another head.

**Step 1:** Wash hair with ordinary shampoo. Rinse hair and apply 1/2 cup of crème rinse/conditioner.

Untangle hair with a wide tooth comb. Do this in the tub, over the sink or sitting up with a towel around the shoulders.

**Step 2:** Leave crème rinse in hair.

**Step 3:** Divide the hair into sections. Comb the hair with a **metal nit comb**. Place the teeth of the comb next to the scalp and firmly draw it through to the end of the hair. If the comb tugs the hair, either you have the comb upside down or too little conditioner on the hair. Check the comb for lice after each stroke and rinse the comb. This procedure will take approximately 1/2 hour.

**Step 4:** Rinse the hair. Leave it dripping wet. Untangle with a wide tooth comb. Repeat the entire procedure again.

**Step 5:** Repeat steps 1-4 every 3-4 days for two weeks. i.e.: Day 1, 5, 9 & 13 This will remove the lice as they hatch and break the cycle.

#### Days to Wet Comb

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

### OPTION B: HEAD LICE SPRAY

Head lice spray, e.g. Nyda, is used because it has been tested and deemed safe and effective - it works by suffocating and killing the head lice and nits. This spray is available without a prescription at any pharmacy. This option involves using two treatments, 8 - 10 days apart.

**Use the recommended amount, and apply product exactly as directed.**

**Step 1:** Use a clean towel to protect the eyes and clothes of the person being treated.

**Step 2:** Apply on dry hair. Thoroughly massage into the hair



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and scalp, especially the sides of the head and the nape of the neck, and make sure that all the hair is thoroughly saturated with the product. Leave on for 30 min.

**Step 3:** Use a lice comb to remove the suffocated lice and larvae.

After treatment is applied, allow hair to dry for at least 8 hours before rinsing and shampooing.

Repeat the treatment 8 - 10 days after the first treatment, following the steps above.

### **OPTION C: HEAD LICE SHAMPOO or RINSE**

Medicated Shampoos, eg. Kwellada, Nix, R&C

This option involves using 2 (or 3) treatments with a special head lice shampoo, 7 to 10 days apart. The shampoo is available without a prescription at any pharmacy. It kills the head lice but not the nits. There could be resistance or a heavy infestation if live, active lice are seen 24 to 48 hours after the first treatment. If this is the case, immediate treatment using a different product is recommended.

**Step 1:** Apply product exactly as directed. **DO NOT** rewash hair for 1-2 days following treatment, or use conditioner for 1 week.

**Step 2:** Remove nits with a **metal nit comb**. Check hair daily and remove any nits found.

**Step 3:** Re-treat hair with head lice shampoo 7-10 days after the first treatment and continue to check hair, removing any nits found.

### **Medicated Rinse, e.g. Resultz**

The rinse works by dissolving the natural wax that covers the exoskeleton of head lice, dehydrating lice and causing them to die. This rinse is available without a prescription at any pharmacy. **Use the recommended amount and apply exactly as directed.**

**Step 1:** Use a clean towel to protect the eyes and clothes of the person being treated.

**Step 2:** Apply the recommended amount, on dry hair, based on the above mentioned quantities. Thoroughly massage into the hair and scalp, especially the side of the head and the nape of the neck, and make sure that all the hair is thoroughly saturated with the product.

**Step 3:** Leave on for 10 minutes, then rinse thoroughly with warm water. Wash hair with normal shampoo if desired. The feel of the product may stay in the hair after rinsing. Use a metal nit comb to remove the dead lice, and as many of the nits as you can. Repeat the treatment 7 - 10 days after the first treatment, following the steps above.



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## **Preventing the spread of head lice**

Head lice can spread very quickly, especially in the school environment. It is important to inform friends, family and school mates of any one who has head lice.

Check your children's hair regularly. If someone comes in contact with lice check the entire family.

- Each person in the family should use their own towel and brush.
- If your child has long hair tie it back or braid it.
- Articles that are more likely to spread lice are hats and other headgear, furry coat collars, pillows, scarves, combs, brushes and hair accessories.
- **The above items should be washed in hot water and dried on the hot cycle or sealed in a plastic bag for 10-14 days or placed in the freezer (or freezing temperature) for 48 hours.**
- Soak brushes and other hair accessories in hot water for 10 minutes.
- There is no evidence that a major clean-up of the house is necessary or effective in getting rid of head lice.
- Have children store their hats inside coat sleeves when not being worn.

### **Re-infestations**

Re-infestation almost always results from head to head contact with a person who has lice (re-infestation from the environment is very rare). If hair is clear after treatment, then head lice are found later, re-infestation has probably occurred.

#### **Lice:**

- Are tiny wingless insects that live on the human scalp. They do not transmit disease and are not a health hazard.
- They are small, about 3-4 mm (1/8th of an inch) in length.
- Vary in color from white to gray to brown.
- Move very quickly and are rarely seen.
- Feed on human blood in order to survive, head lice off the human host will starve
- They do not jump or fly.
- Lice spread quickly by crawling from head to head through close personal contact or through sharing of personal articles such as hats, other head gear, hair brushes, scarves and other hair accessories.

### **Resources**

**BC Health Guide**  
24 hour health guide  
Nurse Line: 811 • [healthlinkbc.ca](http://healthlinkbc.ca)

**NH Recommended Head Lice Management guidelines:**  
available at your local health unit

[www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)  
[www.caringforkids.cps.ca/whensick/headlice.htm](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/whensick/headlice.htm)  
[www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html)

**BC Health Files**  
<http://www.gov.bc.ca/health/>  
<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/index.stm>