

Points to Remember

- **Continue to watch your child for signs of lice for two weeks after the last live bug is found.** Parents often quit control measures too soon and start the infestation over again with surviving bugs.
- **Good communication is helpful for everyone!** It is important to tell everyone who has had close head-to-head contact with your child since the infestation so that all exposed people can be working on the problem at the same time to limit re-exposure.
- **Head lice do not spread disease.** They should not be considered a medical or public health problem.
- Just as with other bug bites, itching may linger after the bugs are gone.
- Teach your children prevention hints:
 - * Limit head-to-head contact with other children at play time or sleep overs.
 - * Avoid sharing personal items such as combs, hats or hair ribbons with other children.
 - * Place coats and belongings on racks or in lockers (not in piles with others coats).
- Watch your child for signs of a secondary scalp infection from intense scratching.
- Do not treat members of the family who do not show signs of infestation. Be sure to check all family members every 2-3 days for signs of head lice.

For More Information

Call your child's school nurse or County Public Health Agency.

Online Resources

Center for Disease Control Web Site
www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/

National Pediculosis Association Web Site
www.headlice.org

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HEAD LICE: A PARENT'S GUIDE



Wood County River BlockBuilding
111 W Jackson St
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Phone: 715-421-8911

Wood County Annex & Health Center
1600 North Chestnut Ave
Marshfield, WI 54449
Phone: 715-387-8646

Fax: 715-421-8962

<http://www.co.wood.wi.us/health/>

Lifecycle of Head Lice

RULE #1

Check the entire family daily during an infestation. Treat only those who have evidence of active lice.

The first life stage of head lice is the nit. Nits are very small, oval-shaped and are normally laid on the hair close to the scalp. They hatch in 8-9 days. Nits stick tight to the hair, unlike dandruff, which can be easily blown off the hair. There can be live and dead nits. Nits not hatched die within a week.

Eggs that are likely to hatch are located no more than ¼ inch from the scalp. Nits located further than ¼ inch from the scalp have already hatched or are empty nits. Newly laid nits may be tan, coffee-colored or darker. White or sandy-colored nits are usually empty shells or hatched nits.

The second life stage for head lice is the nymph. Nymphs hatch from the nit (eggs), and look like an adult louse, but smaller. Nymphs mature into adults about 9-12 days after hatching.

The final life stage is the adult. The adult louse is tan to grayish-white in color and can live up to 30 days on a person's head. Female lice lay about 10 eggs per day. Lice will die within one or two days if it falls off a person.

Lice are spread through direct head-to-head contact with an infested person – for example during play at home or school, sleepovers, sports activities or camp. Lice do not jump or fly. Occasional infestations may be caused from sharing personal items such as hats, combs, and hair ribbons or from items such as pillows or headrests. If your child has head lice all household members and other close contacts should be checked. Anyone with evidence of active lice should be treated at the same time.

Lice are the size of a grain of pepper when newly hatched and grow to the size of a sesame seed. They shy from light and move quickly.

Treatment Failure

RULE #5

Chemical shampoos are toxic pesticides and should not be overused. Seek professional help from your physician, public health agency or school nurse if you have used the OTC lice product more than 2-3 times without success.

If the treatment for head lice doesn't seem to be working, it may mean a different treatment is needed. Here are several common reasons why treatment for head lice fails:

- Misdiagnosis – the symptoms are not caused by an active head lice infestation.
- Not following proper treatment instructions- for example: not applying a second treatment when instructed to do so, retreating too soon or too late or using insufficient amount of product on the hair.
- Resistance to the head lice product used- another lice treatment may need to be selected.
- Reinfestation – the person was successfully treated but the person became infested again.
- Using an inadequate amount of shampoo. Long hair may require two bottles.
- Shampooing hair too soon after treatment. Do not shampoo hair for 48 hours after lice treatment.
- Using a conditioner or shampoo containing conditioner- this may interfere with the lice medication.



House Cleaning

RULE #4

Environmental lice sprays are not recommended. Vacuum areas most used by the person.

Try not to focus only on house cleaning activities because bugs do not survive more than 24-48 hours off of a host. Routine house cleaning, including vacuuming of carpeting, rugs, furniture, car seats and other fabric covered items, as well as laundering of bedding and clothing worn or used by the infested person is sufficient. Only items that have been in contact with the head of the infested person in the 48 hours before treatment need be cleaned.

- Wash bedding, towels and clothing worn in the last two days in a HOT (130°) washer and dry on the high heat cycle in the dryer. Do not forget to wash the coats and hats.
The heat kills the bugs, not the soap.
- Articles that cannot be washed may be dry cleaned or bagged for 14 days to kill the nits.
- Clean brushes, hair accessories, and combs by soaking in HOT water (not boiling) for 10 minutes.
- Head lice do not live on pets. Pets do not play a role in the spread of head lice.



Nit Removal

RULE #2

Removal of nits immediately after treatment is not necessary to prevent spread because only live lice can cause an infestation.

Removal of nits right after treatment with lice killing shampoo or lotion may be done for cosmetic reasons or to decrease the chance of misdiagnosis. Because none of the lice treatments kill the eggs 100%, manually removing the nits (especially the ones within ¼ inch of the scalp) after treatment with any product is sometimes recommended.

- Nit combs, often found in lice medicine packages, should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft.
- Wet hair and a fresh haircut make nit combing easier.
- Nit-pick near a good light source and concentrate behind the ears and the nape of the neck.
- Make sure child is in a comfortable position, well rested and fed. Take frequent breaks and entertain the child with a book or movie.
- Divide hair into sections and use a small 1/8 inch section of hair to comb through at a time.
- Products that claim to “loosen” the eggs from the hair shaft are not effective and not recommended.

Shampoos

Over-the-counter (OTC) lice treatments are not designed to kill bugs immediately. Bug death may take 24-48 hours after treatment. Lice treatments work differently; some work on dry hair and some on wet hair. The length of time the shampoo is on the hair is important. **Follow package directions or your medical provider's advice carefully.**

- Do not use a hair conditioner before the treatment.
- Do not rewash the hair for 24-48 hours after the treatment. When using lice shampoos, avoid using a conditioner for 2-3 days after the treatment to allow for the nit killing properties of the shampoo to work properly.
- Bottles of lice shampoo are designed for a single use. Hair must be completely wet with the shampoo or lotion. Long hair may require two bottles to thoroughly cover the hair.
- The OTC lice shampoos or lotions may be repeated ONCE 9 days after the first treatment. **Do not use these special shampoos or lotions more frequently.** OTC treatments should not be used more than three times in your effort to control the lice. Prescription treatments should not be repeated unless advised to do so by a medical professional.
- Use shampoos or lotions over the sink, not the shower or tub, to prevent entire body from exposure to the chemicals.
- Protect the eyes from exposure to the treatment.
- When rinsing the shampoo or lotion, use cool water to minimize absorption of the chemical by the skin.
- After the lice treatment, change into clean clothing.
- Many lice treatments contain alcohol and may sting open sores that are caused from scratching.
- Some shampoos are highly flammable. Avoid smoking and open flames when using these products!

Special Precautions

RULE #3
Don't lose your
sense of humor!

Be aware of populations at risk to chemical exposures! Treatment can be harmful to both those applying the shampoo and those getting the shampoo.

- If you are pregnant or nursing, do not apply lice treatment to children or use these products on yourself.
- Do not apply shampoos if you or the children have open sores on hands, neck or scalp.
- **Consult a doctor** before applying shampoos to children with medical conditions such as: asthma, currently undergoing or a history of chemotherapy treatment, allergies or epilepsy.

Children under 2 years of age and at-risk children (listed above) should have the bugs and nits manually removed.

Home Remedies

Mayonnaise, olive oil, petroleum jelly, essential oils, vinegar, and isopropyl alcohol are often used to kill head lice but their effectiveness has not been studied.

- There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments.
- These products are not FDA approved treatments and do not meet safety and efficacy standards compared to those established for pharmaceutical products.
- If you think your child has head lice, it's important to talk to a school nurse, medical provider or health department regarding appropriate treatment.
- There are a number of approved treatments options that are safe and effective.