

# headfirst

## Lice LESSONS

- Examine your child's head, especially behind the ears
- Parents are advised to read the directions carefully before beginning treatment.
- The parent must use an extra-fine-tooth comb that facilitates manual removal.
- Daily removal of nits from the child's hair with a metal nit comb at least every 2 or 3 days is a control measure



### Detection & Removal

- Examine head of those children who scratch often
- The hair is systematically spread with two flat-sided sticks or tongue depressors, and the scalp is observed for any movement that indicates a louse.
- Observe for bites, nits, or redness
- Educate family members especially parents
- Advise children to not share combs or personal items



# Head Lice

#### References:

Center for Disease Control  
(<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/>)

Hockenberry, M. and Wilson, D., (2013),  
Wong's Essentials of Pediatric Nursing,  
9th Ed., Elsevier Mosby.

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# What are Lice?

Head lice, or *pediculosis capitis*, are a common name for wingless parasites that commonly infest school-age children. The adult louse lives an average of 1 month with a human host, but only 48 hours away from a human host. Females lay their eggs at night at the junction of a hair shaft and close to the skin because the eggs, or nits, need a warm environment.

The nits hatch in about 7-10 days. Usually, the only symptom is itching. Common areas involved are the top of the head, behind the ears, and the nape of the neck. They do not jump or fly, but can be transported through personal items such as hair brushes, hats, scarves, and coats. Lice are not transmitted by pets.

## Preventing the Spread and Recurrence of Head Lice

- Machine wash all washable clothing, towels, and bed linens in hot water and dry them in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes. Dry clean non-washable items.
- Thoroughly vacuum carpets, car seats, pillows, stuffed animals, rugs, mattresses, and upholstered furniture.
- Seal non-washable items in plastic bags for 14 days if unable to dry clean or vacuum.
- Soak combs, brushes, and hair accessories in lice-killing products for 1 hour or in boiling water for 10 minutes.
- In daycare centers, store children's clothing items such as hats and scarves and other headgear in separate cubicles.
- Discourage the sharing of items such as hats, scarves, hair accessories, combs, and brushes among children in group settings such as daycare centers.
- Avoid physical contact with infested individuals and their belongings, especially clothing and bedding.
- Inspect children in a group setting regularly for head lice.
- Provide educational programs on the transmission of pediculosis, its detection, and treatment.



## Prevalence

*In the US, infestation with head lice is most common among pre-school and elementary school-age children and their household members and caretakers.*

*Common in contact among children during play at school home, sports, slumber parties*

*Estimated 6-12 million infestations occur each year in the United States among children 3-11 years of age.*

*Some suggest girls get head lice more often than boys, probably due to more frequent head-to-head contact.*

*In US, infestation with head lice is much less common among African-Americans than among persons of other races.*

## Impact on Society

- NOT A SIGN OF POOR HYGIENE!
- Head lice are not known to transmit disease
- May cause Secondary bacterial infection of skin resulting from scratching can occur
- Can affect economy as parents miss workdays to stay home with their children
- Parents, caregivers, and children may feel ostracized and negative effects of head lice stigma (fear, anxiety)