

HEAD LICE TREATMENT

ALAMEDA COUNTY VECTOR CONTROL SERVICES DISTRICT

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SUCCESS BASED APPROACH

This guide will supply the information needed for successful head lice treatment and control. In most communities head lice are a continuing problem, and are highly communicable. Head lice infestations can be a frustrating problem, but this information will help you identify head lice and treat your child safely.

HOW DO YOU GET LICE?

Head lice have been a parasite of humans throughout our history. Many people associate head lice with unclean people or homes; this is not the case. Frequent bathing or shampooing of the hair will not prevent head lice or eliminate them once they are established. Lice cannot jump or fly and are usually transmitted by direct contact with infested persons, their clothing, comb, brush or other worn items. Warn children against sharing hats, clothing, or grooming aides with others. Household pets do not transmit head lice.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Head lice are small insects about the size of a sesame seed. They are usually light brown but can vary in color. They move quickly and shy away from light, making them difficult to detect. A more obvious sign of infestation are nits (eggs). Nits are tiny, yellowish-white oval eggs attached to hair shafts. The female louse firmly cements her eggs to the hair shaft, and unlike lint or dandruff, they will not wash off, or blow away. Nits may be deposited throughout the hair, but are more commonly found close to the scalp, at the nape of the neck, and behind the ears. Use bright, natural lighting or bright indoor lighting when looking for nits, or live lice.

SYMPTOMS OF INFESTATION

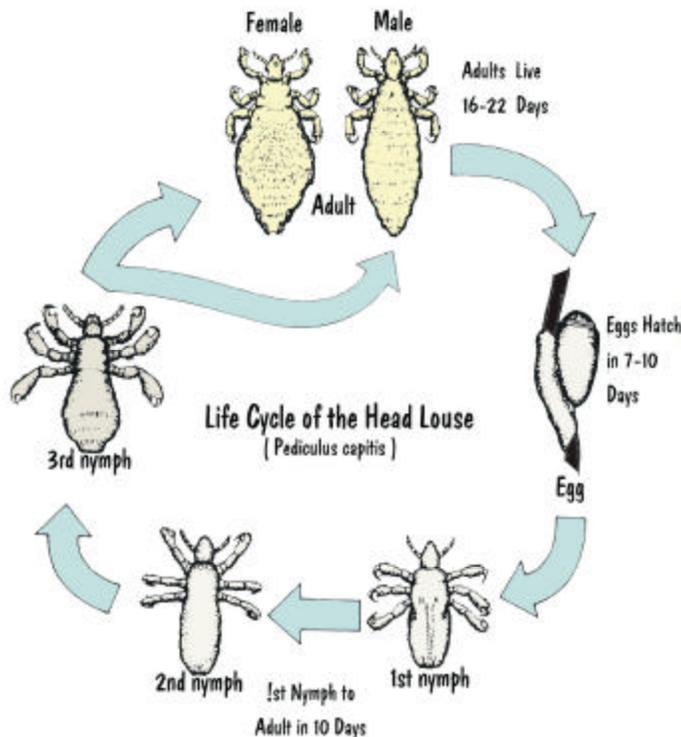
The itching that occurs when lice bite and suck blood from the scalp is the primary symptom of infestation, though not everyone will experience itching. Children seen scratching their heads should be examined.

TREATMENT OF THE PERSON

No treatment is guaranteed 100% effective. Over-the-counter pediculicides come in only a couple of basic formulations; pyrethrum based shampoos and permethrin based cream rinses. Tests have shown the permethrin cream rinses to be the most efficacious. Remember, when using pediculicide products always read the label carefully before treatment, and follow directions carefully! Before treating one family member, all should be examined. Only those showing evidence of infestation should be treated. Treat them all at the same time to prevent re-infestation.

What you need to get started:

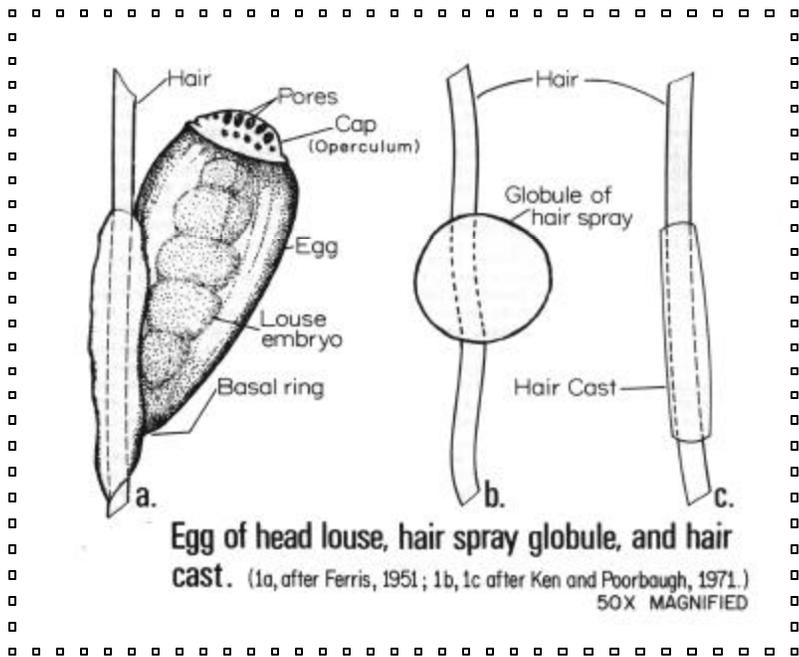
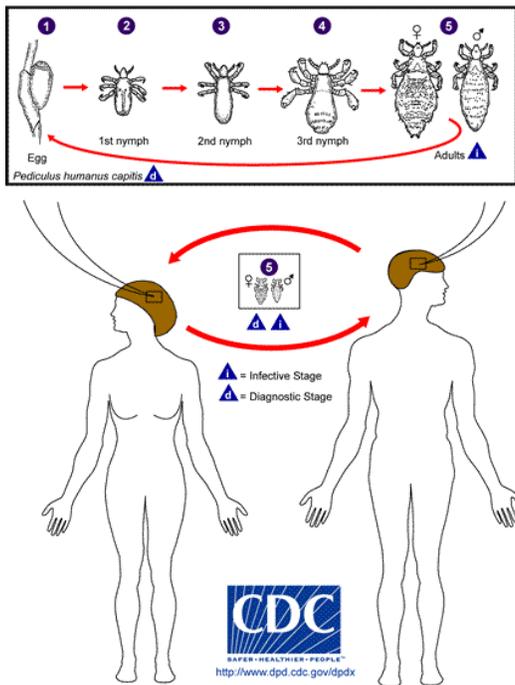
1. A metal, fine toothed nit comb like the Innomed® nit comb, or Twinco® extra fine flea comb for dogs. All the nits must be removed! *The manual removal of nits and lice is the most critical strategy in eliminating head lice!*
2. A stripping type shampoo such as Prell® normal to oily. Do not use a conditioning shampoo!
3. Permethrin based cream rinse pediculicide is available in most pharmacies under generic and brand names.



- Permethrin containing pediculicides while most effective should still be used with caution. Consult your physician if you are pregnant, or nursing, have an infant, have allergies, asthma, or other medical conditions, or see lice or nits in your eyebrows or eyelashes.

Procedure:

1. Shampoo the hair first using a stripping shampoo. A shampoo with conditioner will coat the louse and nit and protect them from the permethrin treatment. After shampooing, towel dry hair so that it is damp, but not wet. If the hair is dripping wet, you will dilute the pediculicide— thus making it less effective.
2. Use the pediculicide as directed by manufacturer.



2. Cont. Avoid applying pediculicide when there are open wounds on the scalp of the person being treated or on the hands of the person who will apply the product.
3. Use the permethrin cream rinse. Have the child lean over the sink, working it in thoroughly with the head held forward, using a towel to protect the eyes. Do not treat in the bathtub or in the shower (in order to confine the lice product to the scalp and neck). Leave it on for the prescribed 10 minutes. Then rinse the hair well with water. Do not use vinegar or any nit-loosening product— this may neutralize the permethrin.
4. Towel dry the hair, but do not use a hair dryer. The heat from the hair dryer may affect the residual properties of the permethrin.
5. Comb out the nits with a sturdy metal nit comb. Combing out nits works best when hair is damp, and right after treatment you may be able to comb out some still moving lice. Picking out the nits individually is inefficient, and should not be done. If the nits are slipping through the teeth of the comb— you need a comb with finer teeth. Methodically go through every section of the hair, rinsing off the nit comb occasionally with soapy water, or wipe on a disposable paper towel. After combing let the hair air dry. Do not blow dry the hair for the next 7-10 days! During this time period, do not use conditioners or conditioning shampoo, mousse or hair sprays. Following nit removal, have the treated person put on clean clothing.
6. A daily nit check is advisable for at least 10 days following treatment and then checking should become part of routine hygiene.

You may have to re-treat in 7-10 days if there is evidence of new nits or newly hatched lice. Treatment itself can cause itching; do not re-treat on the basis of itchiness alone. Lice may live up to 12 hours after pediculicide treatment, but should die. If after the second treatment you find new nits, or lice *do not* continue use the same product. The lice may have been selected out for resistance to the product. See your doctor, and ask about a prescription for Ovide® pediculicide.

ENVIRONMENT:

1. Remove any bedding, infested clothing, or other washable items, and launder on hot cycle, and hot dry cycle to kill any lice, or nits. Vacuum all possibly infested areas daily, cars, car seats, bed areas, sofas, chairs, stuffed animals or toys, or any other item to which hair or lice may cling.
2. One of the old environmental solutions was to place possibly infested items in a plastic bag for a couple weeks. This works, but may pose a safety risk of suffocation to young children who want their isolated toys back, so be careful with storage.
3. Do not use surface sprays (insecticides sold to spray on furniture and rugs). They are of little value if you vacuum thoroughly, and may pose an extra risk of their own.

REPORTING CASES:

Notify your child's school, camp, or childcare provider, as soon as possible, so they can alert other parents. Also, notify your child's' playmate's parents. Open communication can greatly reduce the spread of head lice.