

## Facts About Head Lice



Adult head lice are small 1/16" to 1/8" in length. The egg (or nit), nymph (or larvae), and adult lice can be easily seen. Lice eggs are usually found firmly attached to the base of the hair shaft.

Nymphs and adult lice stay near the scalp, often behind the ears, near the neckline, and back of the head.



Head lice hold tightly to the hair with hook-like claws at the end of each of their six legs. They move by crawling, they cannot hop or fly.



Head lice make your scalp feel itchy, sore or like something is tickling or moving in your hair. They are most active in the dark.

Head lice feed on human blood several times a day. They do not survive long if they fall off of a person and cannot feed.

Head lice are found worldwide and anyone who has direct contact with the hair of an infested person or shares a comb, brush, or hat with an infested person can get head lice.

## Prevention and Control

- Avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact at play or during other activities.
- A person infested with head lice should not sleep in the same bed as other family members or have slumber parties with friends.
- Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons, hair ties, barrettes, or headbands.
- Do not share combs, brushes, or towels.
- Disinfect combs and brushes used by an infested person by soaking them in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5-10 minutes.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.
- Machine wash and heat dry clothing, bedding, and other items that an infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle.
- Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned OR sealed in a plastic bag and stored for two-weeks.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or laid.
- Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs; they are not necessary to control head lice and can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

For More Information

Visit - [www.health.utah.gov/epi](http://www.health.utah.gov/epi)

Or

Call - 801-538-6191

Utah Department of Health  
Bureau of Epidemiology

## Getting Rid of Head Lice



Facts about Head Lice  
and  
Treatment Information

For Parents, Schools and Day Cares



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH**

# Management, Control and Treatment of Head Lice

## Parents/Guardians

Parents and or guardians of children should examine their child's head for nits and lice if the child shows symptoms of a head lice infestation (primarily itching). If nits or lice are found, all household members should be examined as well, every 2-3 days, for 2-3 weeks. Treat your child's head and other household members head's if nits or lice are found. Also, promptly notify the parents of playmates, as well as the child's school or day care.

To successfully eliminate head lice, it is very important that all treatment steps and instructions are followed carefully and completely. Additionally, wash the clothes, bedding, and towels of the affected person in hot water; bag any stuffed animals or other items that cannot be washed for 2 weeks (head lice cannot live for very long away from the body); and vacuum well floors and furniture (don't forget your car). Fumigant sprays, fogs, or other insecticides are not necessary to kill head lice. Such products can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

Talk to your child about the things he/she needs to do to cut down on the spread of lice, such as: not sharing personal items (combs, clothing or head gear) and avoiding head-to-head contact with others.

## Schools, Day Cares, and Others Serving Children

School administrators and day cares are encouraged to help educate parents and staff about the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of head lice.

If a head lice infestation does occur, maintain confidentiality of persons infected. Blame needs to be minimized, it will not help with a solution.

Comply completely with accepted lice management and control guidelines, which should include protocols for dismissing and readmitting a child infested with lice. School districts should have written guidelines for the management and control of head lice. Become familiar with your district's policy.

Minimum control measures can be found at:

<http://health.utah.gov/epi/cdepi/daycareschools.htm#lice>

There needs to be a means of communication between teachers, students, school nurses, parents, health authorities, school administrators, etc. to assure that lice management and control measures are carried out. This may include letters and educational materials.

The school is responsible to assure that the school environment is kept clean, that floors, carpeting, and fabric are vacuumed daily.

## Treatment

Lice treatment is recommended for persons with an active head lice infestation. All household members and other close contacts should be checked for head lice. Treatment is only necessary for those with an active head lice infestation.

Both over-the-counter and prescription treatment options are available. Regardless of the treatment option, follow the instructions and treatment steps indicated on the products label carefully and completely.

Follow these general guidelines when treating:

1. Apply the lice medication according to the instructions on the label. Make sure and follow the instructions regarding the length of time that the medication should remain in the persons hair and how it should be washed off.
2. It is recommended that both the person being treated and the person doing the treatment put on clean clothing after treatment.
3. Don'ts - don't use a hair dryer after applying treatment medicine; don't use a cream rinse or shampoo/conditioner combination before applying lice medication; don't wash treated hair for 1 to 2 days after treatment; don't use more than one head lice medication at a time.
4. 8-12 hours after treatment check the person's head, if a few live lice are still found, but they are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. The medicine can take longer to kill all the lice. Use a fine-toothed nit/lice specific comb (a dog or cat flea comb may also be effective) to comb out dead and any remaining live lice. If after 8-12 hours, no dead lice are found and they seem to be moving just as fast as before, the medicine may not be working. Do not retreat until you have discussed other possible treatment options with your health care provider.
5. Follow-up treatment is generally recommended for most pediculicides (head lice medicines) after 9-10 days in order to kill any surviving hatched lice.
6. After each treatment, checking the hair and combing with a nit comb to remove nits and lice every 2-3 days may decrease the chance of self-reinfestation. Keep checking the affected persons head for 2-3 weeks to be sure lice/nits are gone.
7. Be patient and thorough when examining and combing the affected person's hair.

## Additional Resources

- <http://www.cdc.gov/lice/head/index.html>
- [http://health.utah.gov/epi/fact\\_sheets/lice.html](http://health.utah.gov/epi/fact_sheets/lice.html)
- <http://health.utah.gov/epi/cdepi/daycareschool.htm#lice>
- <http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/common/lice.html>
- <http://www.srhd.org/topics/lice.asp>