

What is head lice?

- Head lice are small insects about the size of a sesame seed (1/8 inch long). Color varies from light to dark tan.
- They crawl very fast but cannot jump or fly.
- They live on the hair on the head and feed on blood through the skin of the scalp.
- Lice eggs (nits) hatch about one week after being laid and can reproduce in two weeks.



Who gets lice and how?

- Anyone can get head lice. Head to head contact is the most common way.
- Lice is transmitted by direct contact with an infested person or their personal belongings, such as clothes, bedding, hair brushes, combs, or head wear.
- Lice spread from person to person by crawling.

What should I look for?

- A child or adult may complain that their head itches or you may notice frequent scratching of the head.
- Check hair under a bright light. Lice are not always seen, but a louse can appear as a quickly crawling bug.
- Nits are very small, white/silver gray (or brown) oval shaped eggs, firmly "glued" to the hair shaft. Nits are not easily removed from the hair. Often found around the ears, forehead and back of the neck.

St. Clair County Health Department

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HEAD LICE

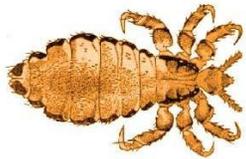


Facts, Treatment
and
Prevention

ST. CLAIR COUNTY
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How is lice treated?

- Head lice can be treated with “over-the-counter” lice killing shampoos, prescription treatments or alternative treatments, such as vegetable oil or olive oil.
- Check with a health care provider before using any treatment if pregnant or treating a child less than 2 years old.
- All household members should be checked and treated if they have lice.
- **Treatment does not kill all nits/eggs which must be combed or picked out.** Remove the nits/eggs or “nitpick” as soon as possible after treatment.
- Wash all bedding, towels and clothing, including hats, jackets, scarves, and other clothing worn within the past 7 days. Clothing that cannot be washed may be dry-cleaned or run through a hot dryer cycle. Leather clothing and plush toys can be stored in a sealed plastic bag for 10-14 days.
- Soak combs, brushes and hair accessories in hot soapy water.
- Vacuum padded chairs, couches, mattresses, rugs and vehicles. Insect sprays are not necessary.



Recommended Head Lice Treatments

Pediculocidal (Lice-Killing) Treatment

Head lice may be treated with “over-the-counter” lice killing shampoos that destroy the louse by attacking its nervous system. Most commercial lice killing shampoos (pediculocides) will kill the live bugs, but will not kill all the louse eggs (nits).

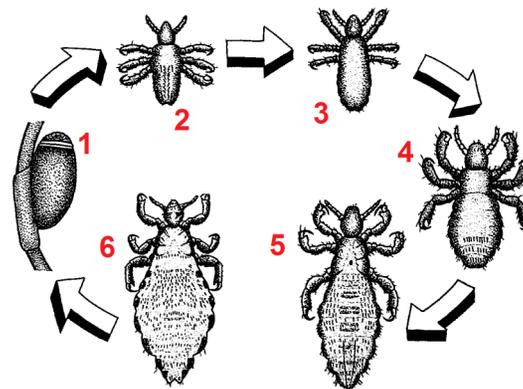
Eggs must be removed by combing with a nit comb and pulling any missed nits out with your fingers. Lice killing shampoos such as Rid and Nix, should be applied and removed according to the package instructions. A prescription for lice treatment can also be obtained from a healthcare provider if “over-the-counter” shampoos don’t work. *Lice-killing shampoos should not be used as preventative therapy on other members of the family who do not have head lice.*

Alternative Treatment

Head Lice infestations may also be treated with a product that suffocates the live lice, the baby lice (nymphs) and the eggs. Common vegetable oil or a heavier weighted oil such as olive oil may be used. Eggs will still need to be removed by combing with a nit comb and pulling any missed nits out with your fingers.



- Apply oil thoroughly, coating each hair as well as the scalp. **Leave the product on the hair 8-12 hours or overnight.** Protect pillows by placing a towel under the head. **DO NOT** apply plastic caps or wraps to the head as they could become a suffocation risk.
- After using the oil treatment, wash the hair with a grease cutting dish soap such as DAWN or JOY. Apply liquid dish soap or shampoo directly to the hair before wetting it with water. Work the soap through the hair and then add water. It may take a second washing to remove the oil.



- When the hair is washed and dry, comb through one section of the hair at a time using a lice comb. Make sure to clean the comb after every stroke. Remove the lice and nits from the comb with a tissue or toothpick and slide any nits off the hair that weren't removed by the comb. **Finding and removing the nits by hand is the most important part of the treatment.**
- Alternative treatment should be repeated every two days for two weeks to kill lice that have hatched from any nits missed during the initial treatment. **It is very important to pick and comb all nits from the hair and inspect the hair daily for the next 14 days, followed by weekly inspections.**



How is lice prevented?

- Check your hair daily for two weeks, then weekly.
- Don't share hair care items, hats, hair accessories, helmets, earmuffs, or headphones.
- Wash hair frequently and brush thoroughly.
- Keep long hair tied up or pulled back.

