

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?



Figure 1: Head Louse

Head lice are small, wingless parasitic insects. They are typically 1/6-1/8 inches long, brownish in color with darker margins. The claws on the end of each of their legs are well adapted to grasping a hair strand.

Female head lice glue their grayish-white to brown eggs (nits) securely to hair shafts. The eggs are difficult to remove without a special "nit-comb". The nits are generally near the scalp, but they may be found anywhere on the hair shaft.

A child CANNOT "catch nits".

Nits (lice eggs) can only be laid by live lice.



Figure 2: Nits (lice eggs)

Interesting Facts on Head Lice

- Dead lice have been found on Egyptian mummies, Incan princes and North American Indian remains
- Women of Northern Siberia threw lice at their men as signs of affection

Head lice can affect people of any socio-economic background and ethnicity and they DO NOT imply a lack of cleanliness or hygiene of the affected person.



Overall, head lice are more a nuisance than anything else, although some people do find the discovery of head lice very embarrassing. If you have children it is likely that they will have a case during childhood, but if you have the knowledge and treatments available at home, it can be easily remedied.

Remember, ANYONE can get head lice and it's nothing to be ashamed of!

White Pigeon Community Schools




HEAD LICE 101: A PARENT'S GUIDE





Share a toy, share a slide, share the feelings deep inside, but never share a hat or comb, or lice could make your head their home!

Supplemental Measures

Head lice do not survive long if they fall off a person and cannot feed. Follow these steps to help avoid re-infestation by lice that have recently fallen off the hair or crawled onto clothing or furniture.


1. Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that the infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water 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 2 weeks. 
2. Soak combs and brushes in hot water for 5-10 minutes.
3. Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or laid. However, the risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a rug, carpet, or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 1-2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed. Nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp. 
4. Do not use lice or fumigant sprays; they can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin. 

10 Tips for Treatment

1. Use a medicine that your health care provider or pharmacist recommends. After treatment, removal of nits is necessary.
2. For nit removal, work in a well lit area, use a flashlight, or hand lens. 
3. Divide the hair into sections and fasten off the hair that is not being worked on.
4. Use a lice comb to detect and remove lice and nits, or manually remove by pinching the nit and pulling it off the hair shaft.
5. Go through hair sections from the scalp to the end of the hair. Nits are usually found close to the scalp.
6. Dip the comb in a cup of hot soapy water or use tape to remove lice, nits, or debris from comb.
7. Move on to the next sections until the entire scalp and all hair has been checked. 
8. Screen the person every day for 10 days and regularly thereafter.
9. If additional nits (at least 3-5 days) are discovered, another manual search is recommended.
10. Please be sure to notify the school if you treat your child. Student must be checked by school office before returning or riding on the bus.

10 FACTS

HOW TO KEEP LICE OUT OF HAIR!!!!

1. Teach kids not to share personal grooming items, hair decorations/clips/headbands, hats or clothing. 
2. Store hats inside coat sleeve or backpack.
3. If your child has long hair, keep it pulled back in braids or pigtails. Store hair care items separately.
4. Do not allow kids to lie down or place their heads on the carpet. Vacuum frequently.
5. Encourage kids to use only their own pillows, blankets, etc. especially at sleepovers!!
6. Head lice do not cause disease and only live on human heads. They cannot survive more than 1-2 days if they fall off a person.
7. Remember lice do NOT jump, fly or hop, they crawl quickly and are spread through direct head-to-head contact.
8. Check your child's head if you notice them scratching.
9. Notify other parents with whom your child has had contact and notify your school office.
10. Recheck (rescreen) at least once a week—make it a routine personal care activity.

