



# Head Lice Information for Families and School Staff

Public Health, Promotion and Prevention Services  
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# Land Acknowledgement

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Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dăkelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, Syilx, and Tăilhqot'in Nations where we live, learn, collaborate and work together.



# Head Lice Facts

**Head lice do not spread disease**

Anyone can get them

Head lice are most common in children aged 3-11



# Head Lice

- Are tiny flat insects about the size of a sesame seed
- Live on the human scalp and feed on blood several times a day
- Are grey, tan, brown, red or black in colour, they appear darker in dark hair
- Can move fast and are hard to see
- Have 6 claws that allow them to grip the hair
- Do not jump, fly or swim – just crawl



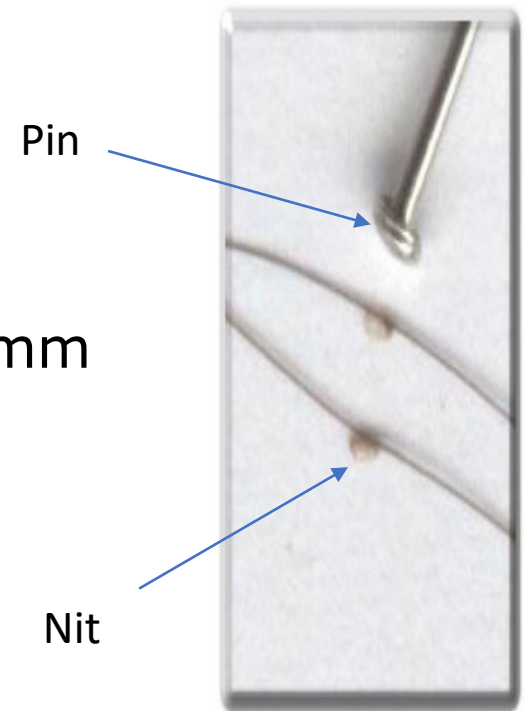
# Head Lice

- Feed by biting the scalp
- Bites can itch
- It is possible to have lice and not know it
- Head lice eggs are also called nits
- Nits are cemented to the hair shaft, and nit shells stay attached even after they have hatched
- Baby lice are called nymphs



# Nits (not everything you find is a live nit)

- Nits are smaller than a pin head
- White, grey, light or dark brown in colour
- Tear-drop shaped
- Live nits are cemented very close to scalp (less than 6 mm or 1/4")
- Nits can be mistaken for dandruff (except dandruff comes off hair easily)
- You **cannot** "catch" nits



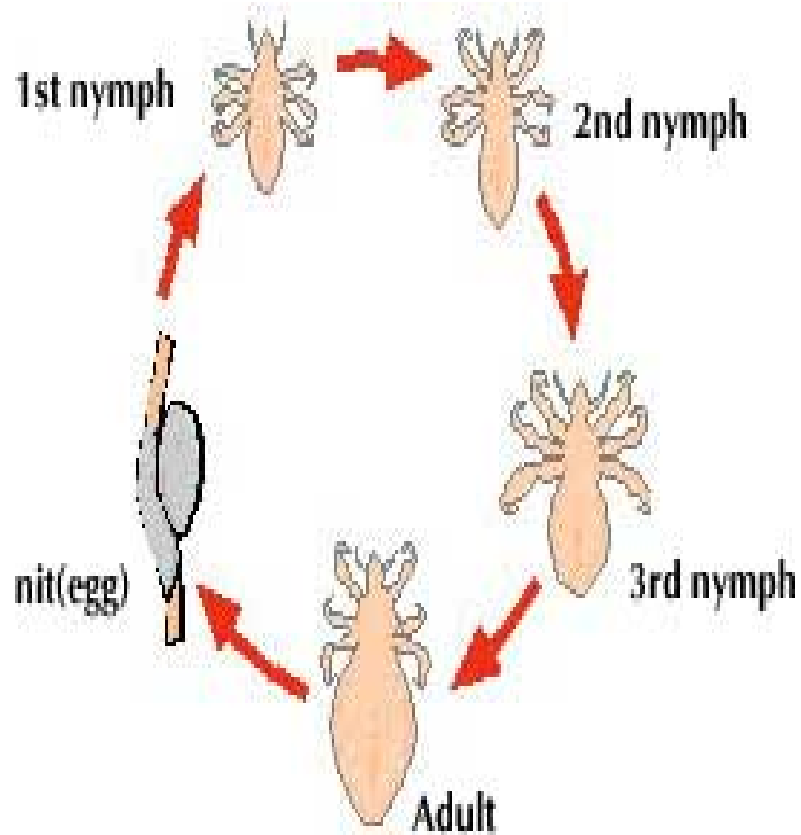


# How are they spread?

- Harder to get than a cold, flu or pink eye!
- Spread through direct head-to-head contact.
- Rarely spread via combs, towels, clothes, hats, hair accessories and bedding.
- **Transmitted most easily between family members, overnight guests and playmates that spend a lot of time together**



# Lice Cycle of Head Lice



- Each adult female deposits 3-10 nits (eggs) per day
- Nits hatch in 7 – 10 days.
- Nymphs (baby lice) take 7 – 10 days (3 molts) to grow to become adults
- Nymphs & adults feed on blood several times a day.
- Adults can live up to 30 days.



# Symptoms of Head Lice

- Tickling or feeling of something moving in the hair
- Itchy scalp caused by head lice bites
- Sores or marks on the head caused by scratching (these can sometimes become infected)
- Irritability!
- Some people have no symptoms



# Checking for Head Lice and Nits

See the hand out **Head Lice - How to check for Head Lice** on the Interior Health Public Website

Check weekly

Not everyone with lice has an itchy scalp





# How to Check for Head Lice

## **What you need:**

Bright light

Regular comb

Metal lice comb

White hair conditioner (this colour helps to make the lice easier to see)

A magnifying glass can be helpful

Paper tissues (white is best as it gives a good background to see what is removed from the hair)

Plastic bag for garbage



# Treatment is Advised Only if Lice or Live Nits are Found

- Check all family members.
- Only family members with live head lice or live nits should be treated.
- Having head lice once does not protect someone from getting it again.
- Keep head lice products out of the reach of young children.
- Read and follow product directions!





# Remember: Treat the Lice and Take Care of the Child

- **Reassure**
  - comfort and support the child and family
- **Normalize**
  - watch your words and body language
  - be aware of your personal reactions
- **Inform**
  - dispel the myths
  - reinforce the facts



# Exclusion from School for Head Lice is Not Necessary

- “No-Nit” and school exclusion policies have not been shown to be effective in managing head lice (Canadian Pediatric Society)
- There is no medical reason to exclude child from school
- Head lice should not keep a child from learning and being successful in school



# Managing Head Lice in Schools

- Know the facts, help reduce the stigma
- Send home information and links to parents early each school year. Refer to the Interior Health website.
- Promote head lice awareness in the school newsletter or bulletin board displays
- Communicate with parents when there is head lice in classrooms
- Have the school nurse present to staff and parent groups





# Managing Head Lice at Home

Learn the facts about head lice

Check heads of all family members on a weekly basis

Teach children about prevention of head lice

Treat only when live lice are found

Use a recommended treatment

Refer to the Interior Health website [School Health Care | Infant & Youth Health | IH \(interiorhealth.ca\)](https://interiorhealth.ca)



# Managing Head Lice: 3 approved treatment options

OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C	
Pediculicides Head Lice Treatment Products: shampoos or cream rinses	Wet Combing with a special nit comb and regular conditioner	Head Lice Treatment Spray (non- pesticide)	Alternative Treatments
Works to kill the lice. Nits must be manually removed with daily combing.	You remove the head lice and live nits every 3 days.	Spray kills both lice and nits.	Alternative treatments have not been proven to be effective and can sometimes be toxic.  Interior Health cannot recommend alternative treatments.
Do not combine all treatment options at the same time as this can reduce effectiveness			



# Pregnant or Breastfeeding Women and Infants

Head Lice Shampoos, Cream Rinses, Sprays:

- Cannot be used on infants
- Pregnant or nursing mothers should only use head lice products following advice from their physician





# Treatment Option A

## (Head Lice Shampoos and cream Rinses)

- Uses 2 applications of a special head lice shampoo or cream rinse.
- Second treatment is repeated 7 to 10 days later.
- Products available without a prescription at any drug store.
- Kills the lice on the head, but **may not kill** the nits.
- Nits still need to be removed using a special 'nit comb' or with your fingers.





# Treatment Steps

1. Comb hair to remove tangles
2. Apply treatment to dry hair, leave on as per directions
3. Rinse out treatment, using cool water, over sink
4. Comb hair to remove tangles
5. Comb entire head with nit comb
6. Continue **daily combing** with nit comb between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> treatments
7. Treat again 7-10 days later
8. Continue regular weekly head checks for lice



# Tips for success

- Apply treatment to dry hair
- Hair should be free of conditioner or hair products before treating.
- Do not use conditioners for 1 week following both treatments, and limit shampooing and swimming for **at least** 2 days after treating.
- Do daily combing to remove lice and nits.
- Itchiness following treatments does not mean reinfestation!
- If new lice or new nits are found following treatments consult your Public Health Nurse, Pharmacist or try OPTION B or C





# Daily Combing

(to remove lice and nits)

1. Dampen hair with **water**. Comb with a regular comb to remove tangles
2. Start at crown of head. Using a **nit comb**, comb narrow, thin sections of the hair
3. Each pull through the hair, wipe comb off on tissue.
4. Comb every section of hair ensuring the entire head is combed. Remove any lice and nits. Repeat 5 times
5. Disinfect combs after each use
6. Throw tissues away in a sealed bag








# Treatment Option B

## (Wet-Combing)

- Wet combing is based on the life cycle of head lice.
- It focuses on removing the live head lice & removing the nits before they hatch.
- Combing treatments are done every 3-4 days over a 3-week period
- This breaks the life cycle of lice by removing them before they are fully grown & able to reproduce.



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- Same steps as daily lice combing but use inexpensive conditioner instead of water.
  - Apply at least ½ cup (125 ml) of conditioner to completely wet the hair. Do not rinse out. Conditioner seems to stun the lice for about 20 minutes.
  - Follow steps for daily lice combing, ensuring the entire head is combed. Remove any lice and nits. Repeat 5 times
  - Rinse hair. Leave dripping wet. Repeat combing without conditioner, until no lice are found. Remove any nits you find.
  - **Do not combine** with Option A or C at the same time as conditioner may cause the chemical treatments to be less effective





- Repeat steps every 3-4 days for 3 weeks. All 6 or more sessions must be done.

<b>1</b>	2	3	4	<b>5</b>	6	7
8	<b>9</b>	10	11	12	<b>13</b>	14
15	16	<b>17</b>	18	19	20	<b>21</b>





# Option C (Head Lice Treatment Spray)

1. Comb hair to remove tangles
2. Apply spray treatment to dry hair, leave on head for time indicated on package directions
3. Rinse out treatment, using cool water, over sink
4. Re-treat 8-10 days later
5. Continue regular weekly head checks for lice



# Tips for success

- Apply to dry hair
- Hair should be free of conditioner or hair products before treatment
- Do not use conditioners for 1 week following both treatments, and limit shampooing and swimming for at least 2 days after treatment
- If new lice or new nits are found after 2 treatments, consult your Public Health Nurses , Pharmacist or try OPTION A or B



# Re-Infestation or Resistance?

- If a child has head lice a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, consult your Public Health Nurse or Pharmacist to review treatment options.
- Only treat when live lice or live nits (eggs) are found on the head



# To Clean or Not to Clean?

- On the day treatment is started, using **very hot water** (55 degrees Celsius minimum) machine **wash** clothing worn in past 3 days, towels, sheets and pillowcases and then **dry** in **hot cycle** of the dryer.
- Items that can't be washed can be placed in a plastic bag for 10 days or in the freezer for 48 hours, ironed, or dry cleaned or put in the dryer on high heat for 30 minutes.
- Don't forget to clean combs, brushes and hair elastics.
- Vacuum areas where child sat or lay including the car seat.





# Prevention?

- Ways to lower the odds:
- tie long hair up, or braid it
- avoid head to head contact
- avoid sharing clothes, hats, hair ties, brushes etc.
- brush hair daily



Check for lice regularly (weekly)





# More Information

Treatment options and Tips for Checking for Lice can be found on the:

**Interior Health School Health Website**

[School Health Care | Infant & Youth Health | IH \(interiorhealth.ca\)](#)

