

# Lice



What are they?

How do you get them?

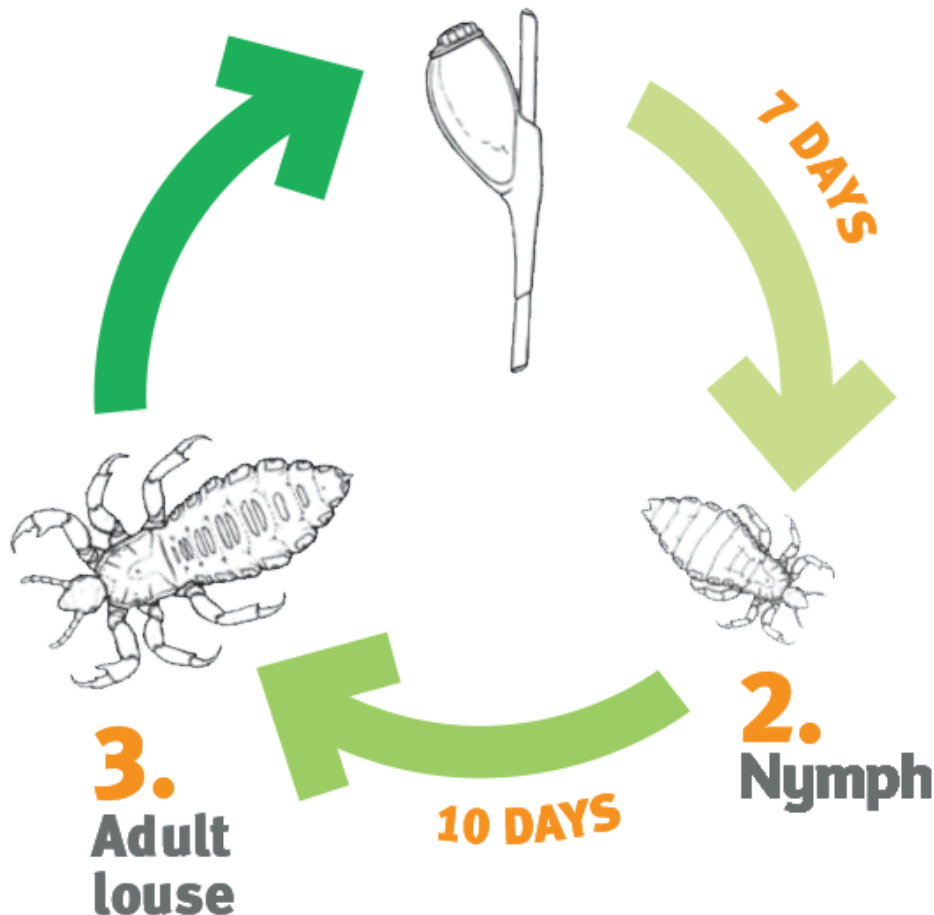
How do you treat them?

What is expected for School?

Lice are tiny, wingless insects. They are neither a health hazard nor a sign of poor hygiene and are not responsible for the spread of any disease. They are a common nuisance throughout the world.

Lice infection begins with exposure to active live lice. After exposure, a female adult louse lays nits, “lice eggs”, on the strands of hair near the scalp. The female lives up to 3 to 4 weeks and can lay up to 10 nits per day. She produces a solution that acts like glue to attach the nit securely to the hair. The nit will hatch between 6-9 days. When the nit hatches, the young lice, called a Nymph, will feed and grow into an adult louse in the next 10 days; Then the cycle continues.

## 1. Egg (Nit)



Lice feed on human blood from the scalp. They need the food source and warmth from the scalp to live. Head lice can survive between 1-2 days away from the scalp however, nits cannot hatch at temperatures lower than those near the scalp.

### How do you get them?

Lice do not fly, hop, or jump; they can only crawl. In most cases, transmission occurs by direct contact with the hair of an infested individual, the most common situation being head-to-head contact, or indirect spread through contact with the personal belongings of an infested individual.

- Head-to-head or body-to-body contact. (most likely mode of transmission) This may occur as children or family members play or interact closely.
- Closely stored belongings. Storing clothing that has lice close together in closets, lockers, or on side-by-side hooks can spread lice. Lice can also spread when storing personal items such as pillows, blankets, combs, and stuffed toys together.
- Items shared among friends or family members. These may include clothing, headphones, brushes, combs, hair accessories, towels, blankets, pillows, stuffed toys, and sports gear.
- Contact with furniture that has lice on it. Lying on a bed or sitting in overstuffed or cloth-covered furniture recently used by someone with lice can spread them.

Common signs and symptoms of lice include:

- Intense itching on the scalp.
- A tickling feeling from movement of the hair.
- The presence of lice on your scalp, hair, body, clothing, or other belongings. Adult lice may be about the size of a sesame seed or slightly larger.
- Lice nits (eggs) on hair shafts. Nits may be difficult to see because they're very tiny. They're easiest to spot around the ears and the nape of the neck. Nits can be mistaken for dandruff, but unlike dandruff, they can't be easily brushed out of hair.
- Sores on the scalp, neck, and shoulders. Scratching can lead to small red bumps that can sometimes get infected with bacteria.

Unless treated properly, lice can become a recurring problem.

### **How do you treat them?**

Once active lice are confirmed by visual examination by a doctor, nurse, or other trained individual, treatment should begin. If a person has a confirmed infection, all household members should be checked for head lice, and those with lice or nits should be treated. In addition, it is important to treat family members who share a bed with the person with the infestation, even if no live lice are found.

Medicated hair treatments are readily available over the counter at most grocery stores and pharmacies. Follow the directions on the product packaging. Due to possible mild reactions, medicated product should be rinsed from the hair over a sink rather than in the shower or bath to limit skin exposure and with warm rather than hot water to minimize skin absorption. Hair should not be shampooed as part of the initial rinse process, and for most products, the hair should not be washed for 24 to 48 hours after rinsing. Itching or mild burning of the scalp caused by inflammation of the skin in response to medicated treatment can persist for many days after head lice are killed and is not a reason for retreatment.

If a few live lice are still found 8–12 hours after treatment, but are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. The medicated treatment may take longer to kill all the lice. Comb dead and any remaining live lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit comb. If, after 8–12 hours of treatment, no dead lice are found and lice seem as active as before, the medicated treatment may not be working.

Do not retreat until speaking with your healthcare provider; a different dose of medicated treatment may be necessary. If your healthcare provider recommends a different medicated treatment, carefully follow the treatment instructions contained in the box or printed on the label.

All infected persons should be treated on the same day.

Nit removal can be difficult and tedious but is a very important part of treatment. Fine-toothed “nit combs” are available to make the process easier. Combing should occur every day or every other day after medicated treatment.

Combing may be most easily accomplished on wet hair, however wet hair is not necessary for the combing process.

Comb the hair with a normal comb to get rid of tangles. When the hair is untangled switch to a nit comb. Slot the teeth of the nit comb into the hair at the roots so it is touching the scalp. Draw the nit comb through to the tips of the hair. Make sure that all parts of the hair are combed by working around the head.

Check the comb for lice after each stroke. A magnifying glass may help.

If you see any lice, clean the comb by wiping it on a tissue or rinse it before the next stroke. Repeat the combing procedure to check for any lice that might have been missed the first time.

The first combing session should remove all hatched head lice but does not remove all nits. Therefore lice that hatch from nits after the first session may still be present. Subsequent sessions clear newly hatched lice or loosened nits getting ready to hatch. After 7 days Medicated hair treatment should be repeated. Continue combing sessions every other day until you have had three sessions where no lice are detected; Continue checking for 2–3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone.

Although effective for removing head lice and nits, shaving the head is not recommended as it can be traumatizing to the child or adolescent and cause great distress.

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.

- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that the infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using a hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and a 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.
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sits or sleeps.

**What is expected for school?**

If lice is suspected DCSD employees will discreetly screen the student for active lice or nits. If active lice or nits are confirmed, staff will contact the parent/guardian and the student will go with the parent/guardian for treatment. The student may return to school in 72 hours after treatment of the student's hair/scalp, student belongings, and student's environment. The student is to remain home until there are no live lice.

The student will present to the office for lice screening prior to the beginning of the school day, if no lice are found and treatment verification (box top/treatment packaging) is provided the student may return to school. Most treatments will require a second application around 7-10 days, please verbally report to the school when the second application is completed.

Daily screenings will be done until the student is lice and nit-free, generally 2-3 weeks of daily screening.

## Sources:

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