

Department of Health Services
Head Lice/Pediculosis

Facts About Head Lice -

- **Lice are small 6 legged bugs that live on the human head and can be found on persons of any age, race, sex, or socioeconomic class. They are present in schools, community settings, and wherever groups of people assemble.**
- **Head lice are not as contagious as many people believe. They are typically spread by head to head contact but can also be spread by sharing items that can have head to item contact - pillows, hats, helmets, combs, or hair adornments.**
- **Children are more likely than adults to get lice as they often touch heads interacting when playing, talking, or sleeping together at slumber parties, camps, etc. Children should be inspected for lice periodically by their parents.**
- **Adult lice are about the size of a sesame seed. Babies are as small as the period in this sentence.**
- **They live off human blood and have a life cycle around 30 days. Lice do not live on animals and cannot be caught from pets.**
- **Head lice do not jump or fly, but move very fast when on the scalp or the hair shaft.**
- **Lice eggs are called “nits” and are laid by the female louse. Nits are tear-drop shaped, very small and hard to see. They do not like light and are good at hiding.**
- **Nits can be tan, red, brown, black, etc. or translucent. The female lays them on the hair shaft using a protein almost like glue which makes them very difficult to remove.**
- **Their bodies are made in such a way that when submerged in water they will not drown. This means that going swimming or washing hair will not suffocate them.**

Getting Your Student Back In School -

- **Follow directions carefully when applying the insecticidal drug to the hair. Allow the product to remain on hair as directed. Re-treat as recommended per the product.**
- **Removal of nits is not required for school re-entry, but is a practical way to ensure that nits do not hatch. Shaving a student's head to remove lice and nits is never recommended and does not guarantee your child to be free from lice.**
- **To see/remove nits, use a bright light or the light from the sun and comb inch by inch with a lice comb. This process takes time. At some point it may be necessary to use your fingers or fingernails to pull remaining nits.**
- **Check other members of the family. Treat everyone in the household who has live bugs or nits - not just the student(s) who attend school.**
- **Wash clothing and bed linens that have been in contact with the infested individual in hot water using detergent. Dry in a hot dryer.**
- **Bag up pillows/bedding/stuffed animals that you do not want to wash in a hot water and dry in a hot dryer.**
- **Vacuum items not able to be washed – couches, chairs, car seats.**
- **Items that cannot be washed/vacuumed may be put in the dryer on high heat for 30 minutes, dry-cleaned, or placed in a plastic bag and sealed for 14 days. While not a guarantee, placing items outside when the temperatures are below freezing may be of benefit.**