

Lice (Pediculosis)

Lice (Pediculosis) are parasitic insects found on people's heads and bodies. There are 3 types of lice that live on humans: Head louse (*Pediulus humanus capitis*), Body or clothes louse (*Pediculus humanus corporis*), and Pubic or "crab" louse (*Pthirus pubis*).

Lice is spread by close person-person contact with someone who has a lice infestation. Lice move by crawling. They do not hop or fly.

Head lice are parasitic insects that feed on human blood. Adult head lice are about the size of a sesame seed (2-3mm). Adult lice can live on a person's head for 30 days. However, they die within two days if they fall off a person and cannot feed. Nits (lice eggs) take about a week to hatch into nymphs (young lice). Nymphs are about the size of a pinhead and take about seven days to mature to adult lice. Head lice is treated with Over-the Counter and prescription medications.

Symptoms of head lice include:

- Itching is the most common symptoms
- A tickling feeling or sensation of something moving in the hair
- Irritability and sleeplessness
- Sores on the head caused by scratching

How it spreads:

- Direct contact with the hair of a person infested with lice
- Wearing clothing worn by an infested person
- Using infested combs, brushes, or towels
- Lying on a bed, couch, pillow, carpet or stuffed animal that had recently been in contact with an infested person
- Animals do not get or spread head lice

Prevention:

- Avoid head to head contact
- Do not share clothing
- Do not share combs, brushes or towels. Disinfect combs and brushes used by an infested person by soaking them in hot water.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with a person infested with head lice.
- Machine wash and dry clothing, towels, bed linens, and other items that a person infested with lice wore or used during the two days before treatment. Use the hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle. If you can't wash or dry clean items, seal them in a plastic bag and store them for two weeks.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, spending much time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to avoid re-infestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing.
- You do not need to have your home sprayed for lice.
- Do not shave heads. This drastic measure is not necessary.

How are lice infestations treated?

- If your medication kills both lice and eggs, then retreatment may not be necessary.
- You should treat again only if there are live (crawling) lice several days after treatment.
- Treat again after all eggs (nits) have hatched but before new eggs are produced. If your medication kills lice but does not kill eggs, treat again about a week after the first treatment (7 – 9 days depending on the drug).
- Over the counter medications include:
 - **Pyrethrins** (A_200, Pronton, Rid, Triple X) which kill lice but not eggs. A second treatment is required 9-10 days after the first treatment.
 - **Permethrin lotion, 1%** (NIX) Permethrin kills live lice but not unhatched eggs. Permethrin can kill newly hatched lice for several days after treatment. You may need to treat again on day nine to kill any newly hatched lice before they can produce new eggs.
 - For a non-medication treatment, use nit combs to remove nits and lice from hair shaft. Flea combs made for cats and dogs are also effective. You may need to repeat this treatment every 2-3 days for two weeks to remove all nits and lice.

Directions for Use:

1. Before applying the medication, remove clothing that can become wet or stained before treatment.
2. Use the lice medicine as directed on the box or label. If you have shoulder-length hair or longer, you might need a second bottle. Follow instructions for applying the medication. Pay special attention to how long to leave it on the hair, and how it should be washed out.
3. Do not use a combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner, before using lice medicine. Hair conditioners should not be used prior to application; these products may result in reduced effectiveness.
4. Rinsing of topical pediculicides should be performed over a sink rather than in a shower or bath to limit skin exposure.
5. Rinsing with warm water is preferred over hot water to minimize absorption into blood stream.
6. Do not re-wash the hair for 1 – 2 days after removing the lice medicine.
7. Have the infested person put on clean clothing after treatment.
8. If you notice a few lice still moving slowly 8 – 12 hours after treatment, you do not need to reapply the medicine. It takes time to kill all the lice. Use a fine comb to remove any dead or remaining live lice from the hair.
9. If, 8 – 12 hours after treatment, you do not find any dead lice, or the lice seem as active as before treatment, the medicine may not be working. Talk to your healthcare provider or your on-campus Student Health Clinic before re-treating. They may suggest a different medicine.
10. Use nit combs to remove nits and lice from the hair shaft. Flea combs made for cats and dogs are also effective. You may need to repeat this treatment every 2-3 days for two weeks to remove all nits and lice.
11. **Wet-combing** – Wet-combing is a way to remove live lice from the hair. Wet the hair and add a lubricant, such as hair conditioner or cream rinse, vinegar, or olive oil. Place the lice comb at the top of the head, touching the scalp. Pull the comb through the hair from roots to ends. After each stroke, carefully examine the comb for lice or eggs. The combing session should take 15 to 30 minutes, depending on how long and thick the hair is. Comb every 2-3 days for two weeks AFTER you find any large, adult lice.
12. After each treatment, check hair and remove nits and lice every 2 – 3 days for the next 2 – 3 weeks.
13. Follow your medication's instructions for retreatment.

- For itching, a daytime antihistamine such as Claritin/loratadine, Zyrtec/cetirizine and Allegra/fexophenadine may be purchased over the counter at a local store. Follow dosing per package instructions.
- At bedtime, use an antihistamine, such as Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) per package dosing instructions. Do not exceed 300 mg in 24 hours. May cause drowsiness, use caution while driving.
- **There are no restrictions on class attendance.**

The following organization also provide reliable health information.

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention
(www.cdc.gov/lice/)

Please call to make an appointment at the on-campus Student Health Clinic or with your PCP or go to Urgent Care or the Emergency Department if your concerns do not improve with conservative self-care treatment or if you have worsening symptoms.

Please know your health problems and allergies. Information contained in this handout is for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for evaluation and treatment by a Healthcare professional. As new and updated information becomes available, the content may change. Please contact your Healthcare Provider or the on-campus Student Health Services Clinic with any questions.

Lice self care handout

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