

Louse

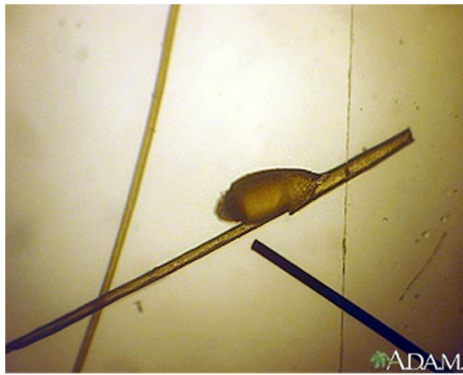


# Head Lice



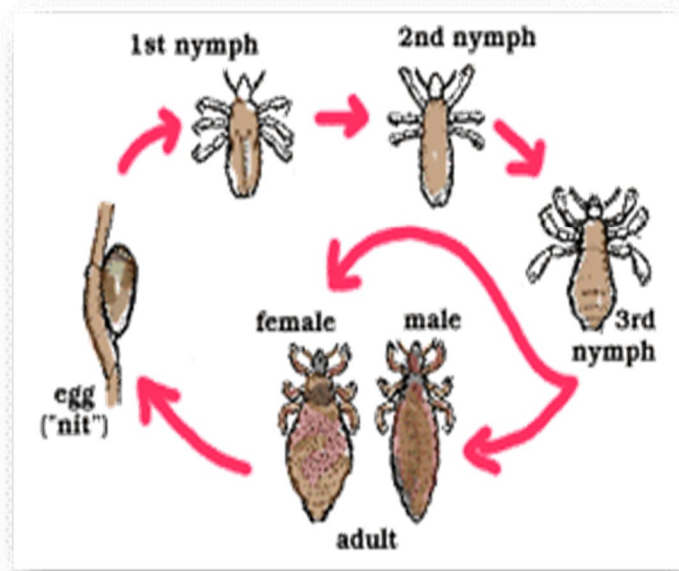
# Nits - What are they?

- Small, oval, yellowish/white (look like dandruff)
- Attached to the hair shafts
- Take 7-10 days to hatch



# The life cycle of a the head louse

**Which Came First...  
the Itchin' or the Egg?**



(The Life-Cycle of the Head Louse)

- Egg (nit) is laid on a hair shaft
- Louse hatches after 7 days
- 1<sup>st</sup> nymph (youngest stage) sheds its skin for the first time 2 days after hatching
- 2<sup>nd</sup> nymph, the second time it sheds its skin (3 days later)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> nymph, the last time it sheds its skin before becoming an adult (8-9 days after hatching)
- Female (slightly larger) and male lice begin to reproduce
- Female lays first eggs 2 days after mating. 6-8 eggs are laid per day for the next 16 days
- Adult louse dies 33-35 days after being laid as an egg

# Head lice



- Tiny grey/brown insects
- Take 6-10 days to mature
- The female lays up to 8 eggs a day
- They live up to 30 days
- Once they become detached from the scalp their lifespan is short

# Head lice facts

- Transmission is head-head
- They only live on humans
- They live on clean and dirty hair
- Lice cannot jump, fly or swim but walk from one head to another
- They do not live in clothes and bedding

# Diagnosis

- This can only be made if a live louse is found
- The person is often asymptomatic
- Itching of the scalp may not develop for several weeks/months and may persist after the lice have been treated.

# Risk factors

- Under 12 years
  - Female
  - Families of 4 or more children
  - Lower socioeconomic status
  - Long hair
- 
- 50% of schoolchildren age 7-8 years are affected.  
(Peak age for experiencing a problem)

# Detection



- Wet combing – takes 5-15 minutes per head. Lice are immobilised by hair conditioner, so are easy to see on the comb
- Dry combing – takes 3-5 minutes per head. Using a comb may produce static electricity, when a louse is spotted on the comb, place a thumb on it before drawing out the comb.



# Treatment

- Treat the person only if a live louse is found.
- Treat all affected household members simultaneously
- Affected children can still attend school
- There is no need to wash clothing/bedding that has been in contact with lice
- Wet combing
- Dry combing
- Lotions

# Wet combing - method

1. Wash the hair in the normal way with ordinary shampoo
2. Rinse out the shampoo and put on lots of ordinary conditioner
3. Comb the hair with a normal comb to get rid of tangles
4. When the hair is untangled switch to the detection comb
5. Slot the teeth of the detection comb into the hair at the roots so it is touching the scalp
6. Draw the detection comb through to the tips of the hair
7. Make sure that all parts of the hair are combed by working around the head
8. Check the comb for lice after each stroke
9. If you see any lice, clean the comb by wiping it on a tissue or rinse before the next stroke
10. After you have combed the whole head rinse out the conditioner

# Wet combing

- It takes up to an hour to do a wet combing session properly
- Repeat at least 4 times, every 4 days
- Session 1 – should remove all hatched head lice, but does not remove eggs
- Subsequent sessions clear newly hatched lice.
- Keep combing every 4 days until you have had 3 sessions where no lice have been detected (this should mean you are free of lice)

Wet combing - The method has been successful if no lice are found on day 17.

If not continue the method until you have had 3 sessions where you have not seen any lice

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Action	Wet comb				Wet comb				Wet comb				Wet comb				Wet comb

If the treatment has been unsuccessful ....

- Assess other family members using a detection comb
- Check that the treatment method is being used correctly
- Repeat the same treatment or switch to something different
- Ensure all affected household contacts are treated simultaneously again.

# Lotions

- **Dimeticone 4% (Hedrin)** – a physical insecticide. Apply twice, 7 days apart. Leave on for at least 8 hours (overnight) and then wash off with shampoo/water. Believed action - Works by preventing lice from breathing and passing out water. Does not kill unhatched eggs. Prescription or over the counter. Suitable for use by all ages and those with asthma or a skin condition.
- **Isopropyl myristate + cyclomethicone (Full Marks)** – Physical insecticide similar to above. Apply to the scalp and leave in place for 10 mins. Comb with fine comb and wash hair with shampoo. Repeat after 7 days. Can be used by those with asthma but not skin conditions or under 2's. Prescription or over the counter.
- **Coconut, anise + ylang ylang (LyclearSpray away)** – Physical insecticide similar to above. Spray hair and scalp and leave in place for 15 mins. Comb with fine comb and shampoo. Repeat after 7 days. Not suitable for those with skin condition, asthma or under 2 years. Prescription or over the counter.
- **Malathion 0.5% (various trade names)** – chemical insecticide. Lice are killed. Suitable for all ages and those with a skin condition On prescription or over the counter. Apply twice, 7 days apart. Lotion and liquid preparations work best.
- **Medicated treatments should only be used if live louse are found.**

# Prevention

- It is difficult to control in children due to close contact with others. There is no evidence to support the benefit of repellents or prophylactic treatments
- **Normal** personal hygiene, housekeeping and laundry measures should be used. There is no evidence of greater protection being offered through more extreme measures
- **Vigilance** and treatment
- Tie back long hair
- Regular combing (every 3-4 days) with a fine tooth comb may help.

# School

- Children with head lice should still attend school
- Head lice do not spread quickly through schools
- Alarm letters from school are not usually helpful
- Close head to head contact is needed to pass lice to others
- Alert parents of close friends to be vigilant if your child is affected