

Head Lice

Pediculosis Capitis

All information is verified by:

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A Nit



Adult Head Louse



How do you catch them?

Headlice do not...

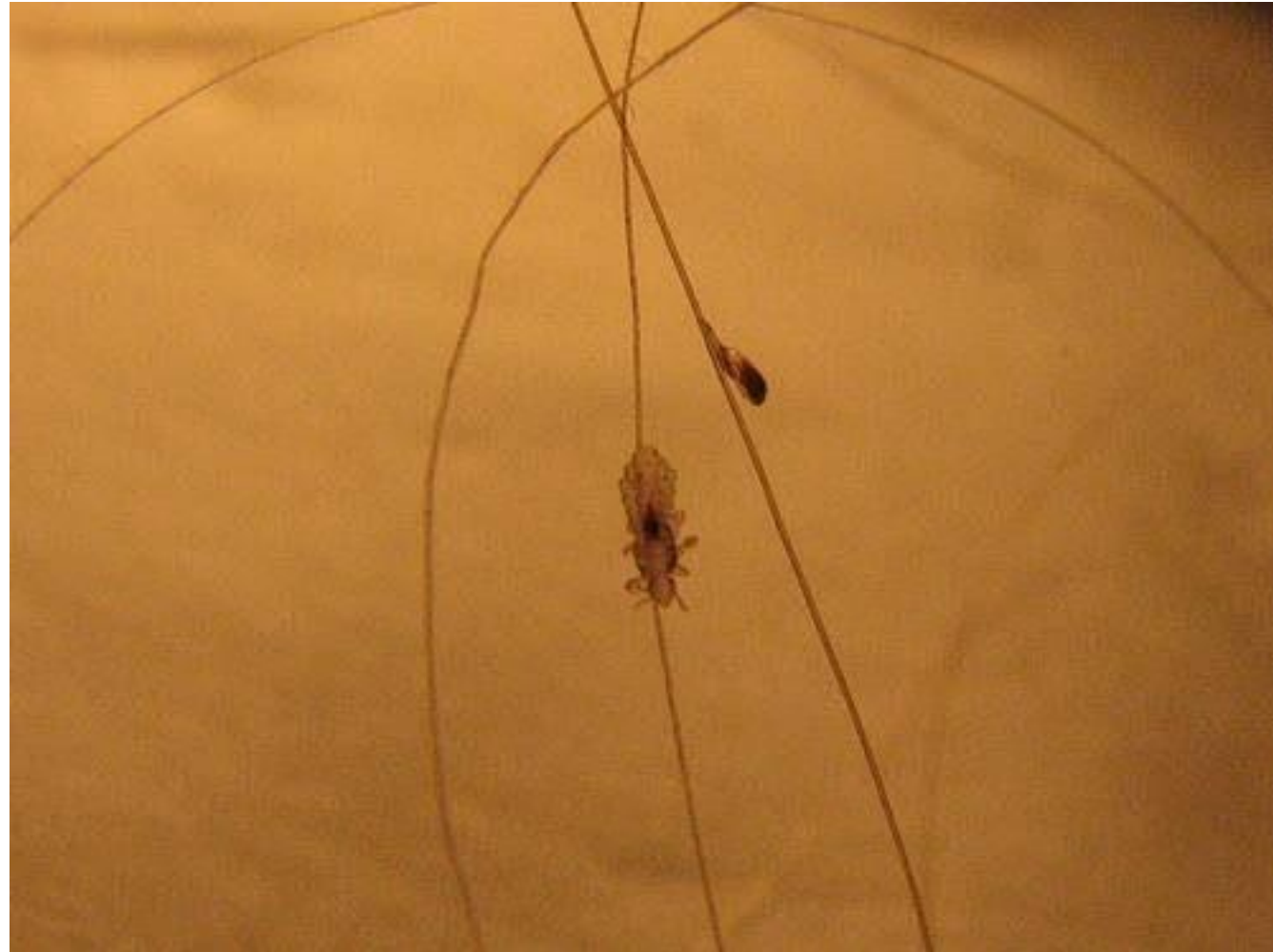
- Jump
- Swim
- Or fly



Transmission is by head to head contact only.

Headlice cling onto the hair shaft and can move rapidly over the scalp.

Louse and Nit on Hairshaft



Headlice are Parasites

Who is the host? Your child or you!

They DO NOT live in:

- bedding
- hats
- hairbrushes
- cuddly toys
- family pets

What is their source of food?

Blood from the scalp only.

Probosis is inserted into a blood vessel and an anticoagulant is injected prior to feeding.

What are the consequences?

Side effects of the anticoagulant in a long-term or heavy infestation produce...

- Flu-like symptoms.
- Irritability.
- Scalp irritation.
- Sleep disturbance.

Feeling Lousy

So treat this as a health issue, not a social inconvenience!

Other Health Issues

A common secondary infection is **impetigo**, which:

- Is highly contagious.
- Manifests as a rash on the face, especially around the mouth.
- Is the breakdown of the skin's self-disinfection.
- Is a common side effect of scratching, especially with grubby fingernails.
- Attend to hygiene within the family to prevent cross-infection.
- Should be treated medically by GP.

Life Cycle of Headlouse

- Lice live an average of 3-4 weeks.
- Lay 3-8 eggs a day.
- Eggs or nits are attached to the hair shaft very close to the scalp.
- Eggs hatch in 7-10 days.

- Lice are ectoparasites (grow by shedding their skin).
- There are four sizes, from a full stop to a sesame seed.



- Adulthood is reached 9-10 days after hatching.

Treatment

Twofold:

- Kill all live lice on the head.
- AND remove every nit from the hair.

Conditioner/combing method is unlikely to clear a heavy infestation.

Insecticides...

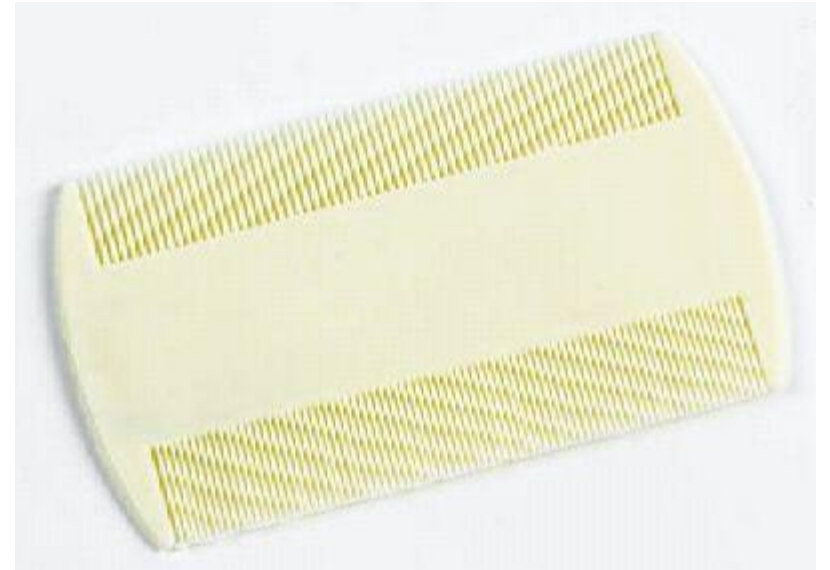
- Should kill the live lice and the contents of the eggs.
- Two applications, one week apart, with regular combing for full 2 weeks.
- e.g. Hedrin (suffocates the adult lice).
- Resistance may develop to products with Permethrin as an active ingredient.

Natural Products

- Vinegar weakens the cement which glues the nit to the hair shaft.
- Lavender oil is a deterrent for clothing lice.
- Teatree oil at 1% exhibits antiseptic properties.
- No definitive clinical trials regarding prevention and treatment
- Exercise caution when using essential oils. Safe dosage is not established in adults, let alone children.

Establish Good Habits

- Know your child's scalp.
- Check your child's head weekly, particularly the nape and sides of the head with a plastic detection comb.
- Be aware of head scratching - investigate.
- Keep fingernails short (and clean).
- Only treat if you definitely find headlice or nits.



Combing Method

- Divide the head into four quadrants, with ‘hot-cross bun’ partings.
- Entertain your child.
- Sit at head-level in a good light and work through methodically with very fine sections.
- Comb with a plastic nit comb.



Summary

- Discourage head to head contact.
- Headlice have no preference whether your hair is clean or dirty.
- Treatment is two-fold: combing to remove nits and application of product to kill lice.
- Combing must be very thorough and for 7 to 10 consecutive nights.