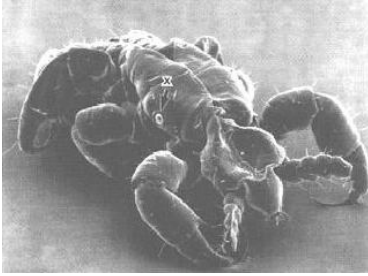
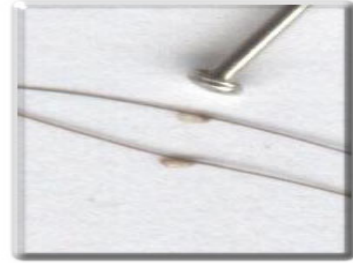


Heads Up for Head Lice



Adult Louse



Nits on hair shaft with
pin head

Head lice infestations are common at the beginning of the school year and September is [head lice](#). Any one can get head lice and having them is not a sign of poverty or poor hygiene. Preschool and elementary school aged children and their families are most [often infected](#). Lice do not regard all heads of hair equally. They prefer children's hair to that of adults, long hair to short hair, and female hair to that of males. There are 12 million cases of head lice infestations in the United States each year.

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that feed on small amounts of blood. Head lice adults are about the size of a sesame seed and are crawling insects. They cannot hop, jump, or fly. The eggs of the louse are called nits: these are small yellowish-white ovals that are attached to the side of the hair shaft. The head louse occurs primarily on the hair but it can also infest the eyebrows and eyelashes. Head lice can live for approximately 30 days on a host and a female may lay up to 100 eggs. The typical symptom of a head lice infection is intense itching. Lice are spread by direct contact with an infected individual or by wearing infested clothing or using infested combs, brushes, or towels.

[Treatment options](#) recommended by the Illinois Department of Public Health use either prescription or over the counter medications. Two treatments are recommended 7-10 days apart. Special fine-toothed combs are available and can be used to scrape nits and lice off the hair shafts. Clothing, bedding, and other objects that could harbor lice can be cleaned by machine-washing in hot water and machine drying for a minimum of 20 minutes using the hot cycle. Nonwashable items can be placed in the dryer on high for 20 minutes, dry cleaned, or sealed in a plastic bag for a minimum of 10 days. Furniture and carpeting should be thoroughly vacuumed.

Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000840.htm>

www.azdhs.gov/als/guides/headlice.pdf

<http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BCH/infectiousdise/headlice.htm>