



Photo courtesy of the CDC

What are head lice?

Head lice (or Pediculosis) are small, wingless parasitic insects approximately 1/8 of an inch long (about the size of a sesame seed) that live on the scalp. Head lice are very quick and use a hook-like claw to stay attached to the hair.

What are nits?

Female lice lay eggs called nits that are whitish, oval sacs approximately 1/16 of an inch long (about the size of a pin head). The nits are attached to the hair shaft by a cement-like substance that makes them difficult to remove. The life cycle of head lice is approximately 30 days during which time each female louse can lay up to 7-10 nits a day.



How are head lice spread?

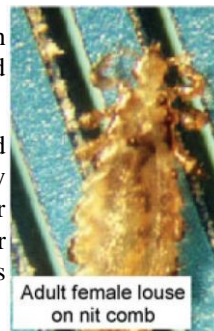
- Typically, direct contact with an infested person.
- Sometimes, indirect contact with personal belongings of an infested person such as brushes, combs, clothing, bedding, upholstered furniture and car interiors, all of which temporarily harbor lice.
- Lice do NOT jump or fly.
- Lice do NOT survive more than 24 hours off a human host.

What are symptoms of head lice?

- Itching or scratching usually on the back of the scalp and neck and behind the ears.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching.
- Visible lice or nits.

What is the treatment for head lice?

- Everyone in the household should be checked for lice and receive treatment if lice are found.
- Use an FDA approved, over-the-counter anti-pediculosis product. Prescription products are also available.
- Read the instructions before using any product and follow all instructions.
- Comb hair with a fine-tooth nit comb to remove lice and nits.
- Disinfect all combs and brushes before using again by immersing them in hot water greater than 130 degrees or soaking in anti-pediculosis shampoo for 1 hour.
- Check your child's hair daily. Manually remove nits for 2 weeks following the initial treatment.



Exceptions:

Children under two years of age or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding **should not** use an anti-pediculosis product. These populations and persons with chronic illness or the elderly should consult their physician.

There is NO proof that the following treatments work:

- Vinegar
- Compounds that claim to dissolve the glue on the nits "to ease their removal"
- Mayonnaise, Olive Oil
- Tea Tree Oil
- Lotions that claim to "suffocate" lice
- Petroleum jelly
- Other household chemicals, including: kerosene, gasoline, paint thinners and turpentine

If you have questions regarding treatment for lice, please contact your pediatrician.

HEALTH Q&A: Head Lice



King George County Schools
Excellence for All

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My child has lice! Now what?

First, don't panic! Anyone can get head lice! It is most common in pre- school and elementary school-aged children (ages 3-12) and females. We probably all had a friend growing up that got it.

Lice can be frustrating. Just the thought of it probably makes you itchy and most would agree it sounds "icky". However, lice is not considered by medical professionals to be a health concern, but rather a nuisance.

The most important things to do are to follow through with a consistent and thorough treatment plan, and educate your child and family on ways to prevent re-infestation.

Does my child have to stay home from school?

Kids are much more likely to get lice from family members, bed-mates, and playmates than from classmates at school.

When lice are first discovered, your child should be treated at home as soon as possible. Please contact your school nurse to let them know the reason for your child's absence. If lice are discovered while your child is at school, the school nurse will call the parents and provide information on treatment options or may refer the family to their pediatrician.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Association of School Nurses (NASN), and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) do not support "no nit" policies or "exclusion" practices that prevent a child from returning to school.

However, your child's school may request your child remain at home for treatment if they determine there is a chronic case or infestation that needs to be addressed with more extensive treatment.

What other steps are taken by the school?

KGCS provides information to help educate families, students, and staff members on the best prevention practices and treatment options for lice.

School health personnel meet regularly with members of the local, regional, and state medical community to stay apprised of best practices and model guidance policies related to health concerns in our schools.

The Health Advisory Committee also meets quarterly to address ongoing health, safety, and wellness practices. Families, community members, or faculty/staff with questions or feedback for the Health Advisory Committee should contact the Supervisor of Student and Family Services or the Lead Nurse at 540-775-5833.

When I was in school, the whole class got a letter and was checked for lice. Do schools still do this?

Most cases of head lice are acquired outside of school. These practices are not recommended by national or state medical organizations, including the AAP, NASN, CDC, and VDH. As further research has found, these practices are stigmatizing and unnecessary and do not assist in the treatment or prevention of lice.

So how can the spread of head lice be stopped then?

The key to successful eradication of a head lice infestation is to break their life cycle through proper treatment.

Parent education is also an important factor in stopping the spread of lice and infectious illness such as the flu or strep throat. Whenever a child is found to have lice or any other contagious condition that could be transmitted, parents are encouraged to share this information with the school nurse and parents of close acquaintances that have had recent, direct contact. This allows the schools to monitor for outbreaks, and families to monitor for symptoms.

Does the household environment get treated?

YES! Routine cleaning of the child's environment is recommended. This includes washing recently used clothing, bedding, and linens in hot water (above 130 degrees, lice cannot survive). Items that cannot be washed should be sealed in plastic bags for 2 weeks. Vacuum carpeting, upholstery and car seats.

Classrooms are also cleaned daily. Teachers discourage students from sharing personal belongings, and monitor students' access to soft surfaced furniture, carpeting, and other items in the classroom that may come into direct contact with a child's head (such as during nap time, in dress-up centers, and so forth). If a classroom has been identified as having a student with lice, the teacher is made aware so that the same procedures outlined above can be completed as applicable.

Will I ever get rid of head lice?

Don't get discouraged! It takes time, but yes, it will end. The main reasons for continued infestations are:

- Did not follow directions on the product.
- Did not remove all lice or nits.
- Did not treat the environment thoroughly.

Remember: Each person with head lice needs a complete treatment. Do not split a single box of shampoo or container of rinse treatment between those that are infested.

Where did these policies come from?

These are not policies. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and Virginia School Board Association (VSBA) provide guidance policies for hundreds of topics to school divisions in Virginia. However, there is no policy pertaining to head lice. School divisions are advised to use current professional medical information in developing local procedures and best practices.

King George County Schools has aligned head lice practices and procedures in accordance with information provided by the AAP, CDC, NASN, and VDH. These organizations are the source of the information contained in this brochure.

For more information, please visit:

King George County Schools (KGCS)

<http://www.kgcs.k12.va.us/student-family-home/health-information>

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-updates-treatments-for-head-lice.aspx>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>

National Association of School Nurses

<https://schoolnursesnet.nasn.org/blogs/nasn-profile/2017/03/13/head-lice-management-in-the-school-setting>

Virginia Department of Health (VDH)

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/epidemiology-fact-sheets/pediculosis-head-lice-infestation/>