

**THE FACTS OF HEAD LICE**

**What are head lice?**

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| Head lice are tiny six-legged blood-sucking parasites. Each leg is equipped with a claw, enabling the lice to grasp onto the shaft of the hair. They can vary in color from translucent looking to reddish brown. Head lice, like chameleons, have the ability to adapt to their environment.  The female louse lays her eggs by gluing them to hair shafts. She will produce approximately 200 eggs in her lifetime. Eggs, or nits, as they're commonly called, hatch in 7 to 10 days. Once hatched, they have a life expectancy of approximately 30 days. Lice are wingless and cannot jump or fly. They can, however, move with amazing speeds. They depend on human blood from the scalp for survival which means they cannot survive on clothing, bedding etc. A louse separated from its human host will rarely survive more than 24 hours. | lice_penny_cdc.jpg |

**How to keep from catching and spreading lice:**

Whenever possible keep long hair in a bun or braid. Children must be encouraged to avoid head to head contact. 98% of head lice cases are spread by head to head contact. Use a specialized head lice mint spray; this is an active louse repellant. Also regular weekly combing with a lice comb even when your child does not have any signs of lice can identify a new case in its early stages before it worsens.

**How to spot lice head lice:**

Adult lice are not easy to see, although they are easier to detect when moving. First, put the child under good lighting conditions and then use a head lice comb and run it through wet hair. This will enable you to spot head lice on the comb. Your priority should be to scrutinize the base of the hair in the most airy and moist areas of the head, such as the temples, the neck and around the ears. These are the main areas where female lice lay their eggs or nits, and this is where you should look for adult lice first.

**How to detect nits (head lice eggs):**

Lice eggs are not very easy to identify visually. Put your child under very good lighting conditions, separate the hair and then, try to spot the eggs near the scalp. The nit (egg) is caramel color, is usually located near the base of the hair within half a centimeter to one centimeter from the scalp. When a child has lice, all the other children and adults in the household must be examined. It is important to remember that nits do not move, they are glued to the hair shaft so even when lightly pinched, you cannot pull them down.

**Which treatment to choose:**

While many medical practices and family doctors continue to recommend over-the-counter lice shampoos, recent studies have shown that 97% of lice found in Canada have developed a resistance via genetic mutations to the most common lice shampoo ingredients: pyrethrin and pyrethroid. \* These products have very little effect on the nits, and most can’t even effectively kill all of the live bugs - not to mention many are still toxic. The only remedy that really works is the manual removal of all nits and lice. The most important tool in dealing with lice is a good lice comb. Not all are created equal; the best comb on the market is called the Nit Free Terminator comb and can be purchased at Nitwits or online at amazon.ca. This comb is essential in your battle whether you choose to comb on your own or call on the trained technicians at Nitwits to help. *(\*Journal of Medical Entomology, Professor John Clark, Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry Department, Massachusetts Pesticide Analysis Laboratory, University of Massachusetts Amherst)*

**How to remove head lice at home using the Nit Free Terminator Comb:**

* Get a small clear tub, fill it with water, and then put it on top of a white paper towel.
* Dampening the hair with water, comb the hair, from front to back, side to side and from bottom to top, staying as close to the scalp as possible.
* Watch the top of the comb for live lice. Every 3 or 4 swipes of the comb, or once there is evidence of a louse, immerse the comb in water, fanning the comb tines.
* Eggs will appear as little black dots that float and the bugs will sink.
* You need to comb like this until there is no more lice evidence being removed.
* Once you have thoroughly combed the hair, separate the hair into sections, and begin the manual process of looking for any remaining nits. Check the entire length of the hair, but focus on the 3 – 5 inches from the scalp.
* If you see a nit, use your fingers and pull it down the hair shaft and remove. Nits are glued to the hair; they are not easy to remove.
* When you feel the child is lice and nit free, cover the hair with any white conditioner you have, then comb it out as described above whipping on a paper towel after each swipe. You are looking for anything brown/black in the conditioner. Keep applying conditioner and combing until you are getting nothing out.

**How much cleaning in the home is necessary when someone has head lice?**

Lice can’t live in the home environment because they cannot survive for long once they are away from their host. They need to feed every 4-6 hours. When it comes to cleaning your home, only minimal common sense cleaning is required: concentrate only on items that had direct contact with those with head lice during the past 24 – 48 hours, change or wash the sheets and pillow covers, clean hairbrushes and put in a plastic bag and into the freezer for 24 hours, gather and place all stuffed toys from the bed in a bag for 48 hours.

**Need help dealing with lice?**

Not enough time in the day? Still unsure of what you are looking for and how to remove it? Want to ensure that your children are in fact lice free? Call a head lice treatment professional! Nitwits, Toronto’s largest head removal service and education clinic, offers lice treatments in two state-of-the-art clinics one in North Toronto and the other in Etobicoke and we are open 7 days a week and able to make same day appointments. We are also happy to offer free counselling and are more than willing to answer all your questions.

Shawnda Walker, Founder and Chief Nitwit, is the first Canadian certified by The Shepherd Institute – a research, education and lice removal treatment centre in the USA. Our professionally trained staff utilize *The Shepherd Method™* of Strand by Strand Nit Removal. We take the time to remove nits properly from each and every strand of hair. Furthermore, our non-toxic products are designed to help facilitate lice removal.

**If you need assistance with the treatment process or if you would like your child’s head checked to ensure you have removed all the lice call the experts at Nitwits Lice Removal Team.**

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[**www.nitwits.ca**](http://www.nitwits.ca)