

CHECKING FOR HEAD LICE

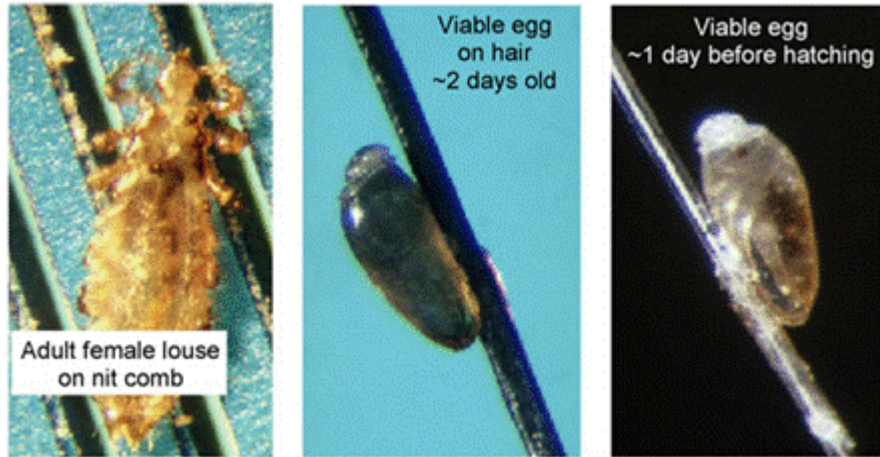
Get comfortable & set up

Be sure there is a good light source, either sunlight or a bright lamp. If possible, use reading glasses (2X or greater) that may be obtained in a drug store to help see lice and nits (eggs).

Make sure you and the child are comfortable; take your time. You'll be glad you did. Part the hair in small sections. Work with very thin sections to be able to see every shaft of hair.

What do lice and nits look like?

Head lice are small, grayish/tan, wingless, parasitic insects adapted to living mainly on the scalp and neck hairs of their human host. They have six legs that have evolved to grasp hair shafts tightly.



Magnified Images of Lice and Nits (Eggs)

Nits are quite small, white, yellowish or partially dark, and oval shaped. They are firmly attached to the hair shaft. The narrow point of the oval usually attaches to the hair shaft at an angle. Nits are most often found on hairs at the base of the neck and behind the ears. But they can be anywhere on the head, so check all the hair carefully.

Magnified Image of Nits (lice eggs) on human hair, compared to the head of a pin.

Remember that nits are often confused with dandruff, dried hairspray or gel, or other harmless insects that may have blown into the child's hair. If you can gently brush it away, it's not a nit. Nits are stuck to hair and have to be removed with a nit comb or fingernails or snipped off with scissors.

Treat only if live lice are found

See the treatment information that follows. Treat only those with live lice; other family members should only be treated if they are also found to have live lice. If only nits are found, see the section on "Physical Removal" to learn how to rid the head of nits.

Questions?

Please call the Chabot school office at 879-1060 or OUSD Health Services at 879-8816 if you have questions or are unable to pay for treatment if live lice are found.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

Head lice and disease

- Head lice are *not* a disease and do *not* carry any disease.
- The most serious complication of lice is infection due to scratching.

Head lice and personal hygiene

- Head lice are *not* a sign of poor hygiene, dirty hair, or lack of parental care,
- Anyone with hair - long or short, clean or dirty - can get head lice.

Cleaning

- Head lice are *not* caused by dirt and do *not* live in the environment.
- It is *not* necessary to wash *all* household linen, vacuum, scrub or spray the house with insecticide, treat pets, clean or vacuum the classroom, or store any items in plastic bags.
- It is a good idea to wash bed linens, towels, stuffed animals the child sleeps with and dry with heat to eliminate lice or eggs.
- It is a good idea to wash combs, brushes, hats and other hair accessories in hot water each day to dislodge any lice and nits.

Head lice:

- Do *not* survive more than a few hours away from the body as they quickly dehydrate.
- Need to feed from the scalp every few hours in order to stay alive.
- Do *not* leave the scalp unless they are dead, dying, or have been removed.
- That fall off the end of the hair are at the end of their life cycle.
- Have curved legs evolved for gripping and climbing along the hair shaft.
- *Cannot* fly, jump, or swim.

Nits:

- Must have been fertilized by a male to hatch lice.
- Must be within an inch of the scalp to hatch and produce lice.
- More than 1cm away from the scalp have either hatched or have died.
- Do *not* need to be treated with chemicals; manually remove them daily while checking for live lice, until no more nits are present.

Transmission

- Head lice are most readily transmitted by direct head to head contact; have children avoid head to head contact when doing group work, playing games, etc. Sometimes, they are transferred by shared combs, hats, or hair accessories.
- Head lice are specific to humans and do *not* live on any other animals.

Screening for lice

- Studies demonstrate that screening for lice in schools does *not* decrease the incidence of head lice and is *not* cost effective.
- Results of studies suggest that education of parents in identifying and managing head lice is more effective in screening for lice. Class wide or school wide screening should be discouraged.

Exclusion from school

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, the Centers for Disease Control, the California State Department of Health, and the Harvard School of Public Health recommend that students with nits and/or head lice infestations not be excluded from school. Unnecessary absences increase student's risk of failing.

HOW TO TREAT HEAD LICE

**IMPORTANT: TREAT ONLY THE PERSON WITH LIVE LICE!!
CHECK OTHERS IN CLOSE CONTACT TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY ALSO HAVE LIVE LICE.**

CHEMICAL TREATMENT

An FDA approved over the counter cream rinse with PERMETHRIN (1%) has been shown to be the most effective treatment for head lice. The NIX brand and some generic label products use PERMETHRIN – check the label carefully and choose these. (Products with Pyrethrum are NOT as effective.) Follow the directions!!

1. Before applying, remove all clothing from the child, waist up. Cover the child's eyes with a towel or washcloth. Do not treat in the shower or bathtub. Have child lean over the sink and only apply the product to the head area.
2. Apply lice product on dry hair, according to the label instructions.
3. Do not rewash the hair for 1-2 days after treatment. Use only regular shampoo for two weeks after treatment, no cream rinses or conditioning shampoos.
4. Following treatment, you may use a metal lice comb to remove lice and nits from the hair shaft. Combing out any remaining nits after treating is recommended but not necessary.
5. Treatment may be repeated in 7-10 days **only if live lice are found at that time**; do NOT repeat treatment only because your child complains of itching or is scratching.
6. Continue to check all treated persons for 2-3 weeks after you think they are clear.
7. If lice reoccur after two treatments, see your child's doctor to see if a prescription medication is needed.

PHYSICAL REMOVAL OPTION

If you decide to take the time to try physical removal of lice and nits with a special comb instead of using a chemical treatment:

1. Comb the child's hair every day for about two weeks to remove the live lice, including those that have hatched since the day before.
2. Use good light, magnification, and a good louse or nit comb to locate and remove the insects. We do not recommend electronic "zapper" combs as they may not get close enough to the scalp to kill eggs.
3. Good combs are inexpensive at the drug store, pet store, or through the internet. Combs that are metal with closely spaced teeth will work better than plastic combs or combs with more widely spaced teeth.
4. Straight hair tends to be easier to comb, while hair with tight curls may be more difficult and even painful. This is something to consider in your decision to try manual removal.
5. Although it may seem that the hair is covered with eggs, there usually are less than a dozen active lice on the head at any time.
6. Eggs more than an inch away from the scalp are nearly always hatched and do not, by themselves, indicate the presence of lice.
7. Hair should be cleaned and well combed or brushed to remove tangles before trying to use a louse comb.
8. Clean the comb frequently to remove any caught lice or eggs.
9. You may need several hours each night for several nights to clear up lice and might want to have a movie on during this time.
10. Sit behind the child, using a bright light, to inspect and comb through the hair, one small section at a time. Repeat until no more active lice are observed.
11. Some parents/guardians find that hair conditioners, vegetable oils, or water help lubricate the hair and make combing easier; others find that these make it more difficult to see the eggs.

OTHER REMOVAL OPTIONS

The chemical and physical removal options listed above are recommended by OUSD health services. We also recommend that you contact your Pediatrician for their opinions.

1. Local Pediatricians indicate that lice have been found to build resistance to the chemicals used for treatment. Leaving the chemical treatment on longer than suggested on the packaging may be more effective, but discuss this with your Pediatrician first.
2. A safer method, also recommended by local Pediatricians, is the suffocation method. No strong chemicals involved and the results have been found quite effective. Place one quart of mayonnaise on the child's head, covering all hair and scalp, work in well. Place a shower cap over the head and leave on for five hours. The lice will suffocate. Wash well. Hair is shiny and lice free, but NOT nit free. Continue to remove nits manually, and check for new hatchings daily. Repeat suffocation process if you find nits have hatched new live lice. You'll have to continue with this cycle until all nits are gone.