

Thun, September 2022

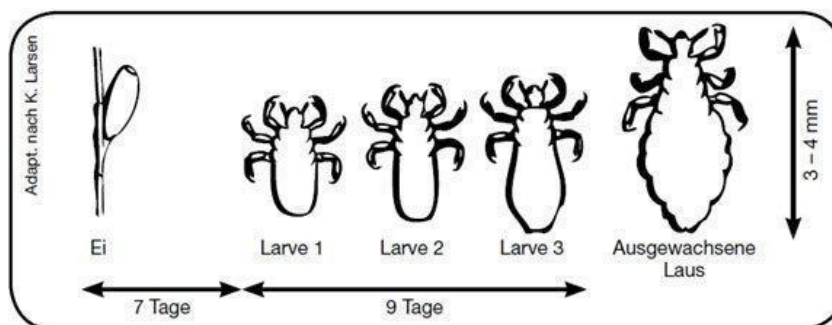
## Head Lice (Englisch)

The head louse is a wingless insect (*Pediculus humanus capitis*), with a piercing appendage and three pairs of legs. The ends of the legs are shaped like hooked claws, with these claws the head lice can easily hold onto hair strands and move along them. Head lice climb into the hair but cannot jump, fly or swim. Fully grown head lice are approximately 2.5-3.5mm in length. The parasite's body is either whitish-gray or brown in colour, adapting its precise body colour to the individual's skin and hair colour. After having sucked blood, the lice turn reddish because the blood-filled digestive tract shines through the outer shell. Head lice are found on human scalp hair, preferring the back of the head, the nape of the neck or the region behind the ears. Every 2-4 hours head lice feed exclusively on human blood, by piercing the skin and sucking blood through this opening. Simultaneously they release a toxin which reduces blood clotting and produces a sensation of itching. The life cycle of the male lice is approximately 15 days and the females live 30-40 days. They manage to thrive best at a temperature of 28-32 degrees celsius. Without a meal of blood, a louse can only survive a maximum of 3 days.



Head lice are a worldwide problem and are found in many geographical areas and different societies. The occurrence of head lice has increased in the past few years, conditioned by our lifestyles: increased mobility, more travelling and migration. After school holidays, the high season for lice begins here. 60 % of all affected people are children between the ages of 5-11 years of age. A case of lice is not a sign of poor hygiene, since children who wash their hair everyday can also be infested.

### Life cycle



### Nits

The term nit refers to the eggs of the head lice. A louse lays, primarily on the hair shaft, between 3-8 eggs per day, reaching a total of 100-300 eggs in a lice lifetime. The nits are oval, egg-shaped and 0.4-1 mm in size. They are light coloured and look similar to dandruff but do not come off the hair.



### Transmission

A head lice infestation occurs primarily through **direct head contact** from person to person. Lice can also be transmitted through **indirect contact** via combs, hair brushes, caps, bike helmets or head bands. House pets are not carriers of head lice.

## Symptoms

- Often itching (not always) due to the secretions of the lice. The nape of the neck and behind the ears are the regions that tend to be mostly affected.
- Red, irritated skin on the neck (bites) are caused by continuous scratching.
- Lateral swelling of the nearby lymph glands.

## Procedure to discover head lice, eggs and nits

1. Check your child in a well lit area.
2. Before examining the hair, do not touch the head and observe carefully, if any lice are visible.
3. Lice hide as soon as the hair is touched.
4. After washing the hair, use a large portion of hair conditioner to thoroughly comb out the hair, strand by strand, right down to the ends. Wipe the comb after each strand on a white paper towel.
5. **Nits must be removed by hand (between the finger nails) because they obstinately stick to hair strands. A magnifying glass facilitates the search for lice/nits.**
6. A hair conditioner is to be rinsed out at the very end.
7. Always examine your child's entire head.

<b>Comb and Treatment Plan</b>	
<b>When</b>	<b>What</b>
Day 1	<p><b>A:</b> In a case of head lice and/or eggs/nits treat with a product, as well as comb out all lice and remove all nits by hand.</p> <p><b>B:</b> When neither head lice nor eggs/nits are visible no immediate measures are necessary.</p>
Day 3	<b>A:</b> Comb out (as long as lice are visible - comb control) and continue removing nits by hand.
Day 7	<p><b>A:</b> Second part of the lice treatment program following instructions as outlined in Day 1.</p> <p><b>B:</b> Comb control.</p>
Day 10	<b>A+B:</b> Comb control.
Day 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the case of a continuous head lice infestation (or a new one); begin the treatment anew as on Day 1. following the outline A "treat with a head lice product and comb out".</li> <li>• When neither head lice nor eggs/nits are visible then the treatment program is complete.</li> </ul>
Day 21	To avoid a possible new infestation, a comb control should be carried out during a further period of 2 weeks (once weekly).
Day 28	To avoid a possible new infestation, a comb control should be carried out during a further period of 2 weeks (once weekly).
<p><b>If in the follow-up examination, your child still has head lice or nits, the Head Lice Co-ordinator can together with the school doctor prescribe a school dispensation. The dispensation is in vigour until the child is completely free from lice and nits.</b></p>	

## **Important**

- In the case of head lice, please quickly inform your nearby surroundings: school, daycare, friends etc. to avoid a further outbreak.
- Acquire in a pharmacy or drugstore a remedy for head lice (i.e. Rausch, Laus-Stop, Lies-Ex, Hedrin, Pedicul, Hermal). Use the product exactly as instructed in the package directions. Chemical products contain insecticides and are not harmless. It is possible that the head lice develop a resistance to the products which means that they are no longer killed.
- Once weekly check family members and visiting children for any head lice or nits.
- Clean combs, hairbrushes and other hair tools by placing them in hot soapy water for 15min.
- Washable items that came in direct contact with the affected hair should be washed at 40 - 60° or put into a sealed plastic bag and not be used for 7 days (eg. stuffed animals or pillows & cushions).
- Clean clothes, furniture, or bed linen on the first day of treatment and again after 7 days. At best, again after 14 days.
- Tie long hair to avoid and minimize direct hair contact.
- Bike helmets, hats, caps, hair accessories and hairbrushes should not be shared.

For any further questions, please contact: Mrs. Regula Heubach-Traxler ([regula.heubach@bluewin.ch](mailto:regula.heubach@bluewin.ch)).