



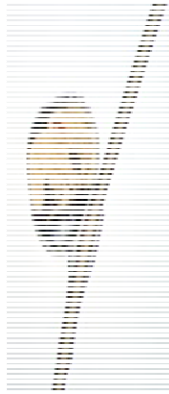
# HEAD LICE: TREATMENT AND PREVENTION



## HEAD LICE FACTS

**Life Cycle:** Head lice are tiny insects (about 1/10 to 1/8 of an inch long) make their home in human hair and feed on human blood. Head lice multiply rapidly, laying small grayish-colored oval-shaped eggs (called nits), which stick to the base of each hair, close to the scalp.

**Signs of Head Lice:** Head lice are hard to find, but you can see the nits (eggs) if you look closely. Nits are most often found along the hairline at the back of the head and neck, and behind the ears. Nits should not be confused with clumps of hair spray, hair gels, or dandruff. Dandruff can be easily flicked off the hair; nits cannot be easily flicked off because they are firmly stuck to individual hairs.



**Who Can Get Head Lice?** Anyone can get head lice, no matter where they live, or how clean their home is kept. Most people don't know they are infested until they see the nits or lice, or have a persistent itching of the scalp. This itching is sometimes accompanied by infected scratch marks or what appears to be a rash.

**How Does a Person Get Head Lice?** Head lice have no wings and do not fly or jump, but they can run quickly through hair. You can "catch" head lice through:

- Direct contact with an infested person;
- Sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, hair-care items, towels, and/or pillowcases; and
- Sharing clothing, headgear (hats, scarves, sports helmets, etc.), ribbons, and/or other head coverings.



**What to Do If a Family Member Has Head Lice:** All family members with lice or nits must be treated. There are several ways to get rid of lice, but all of them follow the same basic steps:

1. **Kill The Lice**  
Use an oil and vinegar mixture, an over-the-counter medication, or a prescription medication. (See Oil and Vinegar Mixture Section).
2. **Remove All Nits**  
The most important step in the elimination of head lice is the removing of the nits from the hair. Removing all nits is key to getting rid of lice. (See Remove All Nits Section)
3. **Remove Lice from the Environment** (See Remove Lice From Your Home Section)
4. **Follow-up and Repeat as Needed**  
Nits are hard to see and remove, and hatch every 7 days. Chances are a few nits will remain after one treatment. For this reason, it is important to repeat treatment every 7 days until all nits are gone.

## TREATMENT DETAILS

**Important:**

- ✓ **Use a different towel for each step of the treatment and for each person treated.**
- ✓ **Wash and dry all towels after use.**
- ✓ **Repeat treatment every 7 days and use nit comb daily between treatments. Do this for at least 2 weeks.**

**Required items needed:**

- Shower cap
- White vinegar
- Vegetable oil
- 1-cup Measuring Cup
- Lice Comb
- Hair Clips
- Kleenex



Acknowledgements:

Washington County Department of Health, Environment and Land Management and the Minnesota Department of Health.

## KILL LICE: OIL AND VINEGAR MIXTURE

1. Mix together one cup oil and one cup white vinegar.
2. Pour mixture onto the hair and scalp.
3. Cover hair with a close-fitting shower cap. (Pile hair on head as needed.) Leave mixture and cap on hair for at least 6 hours. We recommend leaving mixture on overnight.
4. After six hours, or in the morning, remove all nits (see Remove All Nits Section).
5. Wash hair with a little dish soap to help break up the oil, and then wash hair with your regular shampoo.
6. Repeat steps 1-5 in seven days.

## REMOVE ALL NITS: DAILY

### Prepare and Use Nit Removal Solution

- ✓ Mix 3 cups of white vinegar and three cups of water (1:1 Mixture)
- ✓ Soak a towel in the mixture, and use the remaining mixture to wet the hair. Wrap the hair with the towel and leave wrapped for 60 minutes.

### Getting Ready

- ✓ Locate your lice comb (a metal short tooth comb works best) and hair clips.
- ✓ Select a comfortable area with good overhead lighting.
- ✓ Consider using a TV program or movie to help the child sit quietly.

### Combing Out the Nits

- ✓ After applying the nit removal solution, divide hair into one inch sections with hair clips.
- ✓ Hold each section at hair's end and place comb next to the scalp. Comb from scalp to end of hair.
- ✓ Between combing of sections, wipe comb with tissue to remove nits from comb.
- ✓ Comb repeatedly until all nits are gone.
- ✓ Use hair clips to clip back sections that have been combed.
- ✓ Dispose of all used tissues.
- ✓ Boil for 15 minutes daily all combs, lice combs, and hair accessories used during removal of nits.
- ✓ COMB HAIR DAILY FOR NIT REMOVAL.



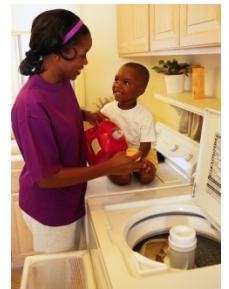
## Hints for Finding the Nits

- ✓ Look at the end of the hair attached to the scalp. Nits will look like a small bump and will be stuck to the hair shaft near the scalp.
- ✓ Look at the nape of the neck, and around the ears and crown, as this is often where nits are located.

## REMOVE LICE FROM YOUR HOME

Head lice cannot survive off the human body for more than two days. They do not live on pets. Any nits, which fall off the head, will not hatch or reattach. To rid your home of lice, you should:

- Wash bedding in hot water (130 degrees F) and dry in a hot dryer or iron with a hot iron.
- Wash and dry recently worn clothing (including coats, caps, and scarves) in hot temperatures.
- Clothing, stuffed animals, or bedding that cannot be washed may be dry cleaned or sealed in a double plastic bag for two weeks.
- Clean combs, brushes, and similar items by boiling in water for 15 minutes.
- Clean floors, carpeting, and furniture by thorough vacuuming. The use of insecticide sprays is not recommended.
- DAILY: Put coats, hats, pillows, blankets, sheets, and anything else that your child has close contact with, in the dryer for 20 minutes daily.



## PREVENTION TIPS

- Encourage your children to refrain from sharing caps, scarves, and sweaters.
- On a regular basis, check your children for head lice.
- When it is known that head lice are present in a community, check your children's heads for lice.
- Remember, if one person in a family, camp, or school has head lice, there's a chance others will too. Check your entire family, and treat everyone as necessary.
- Please do not depend on someone else to check your child's head – this may delay treatment.