



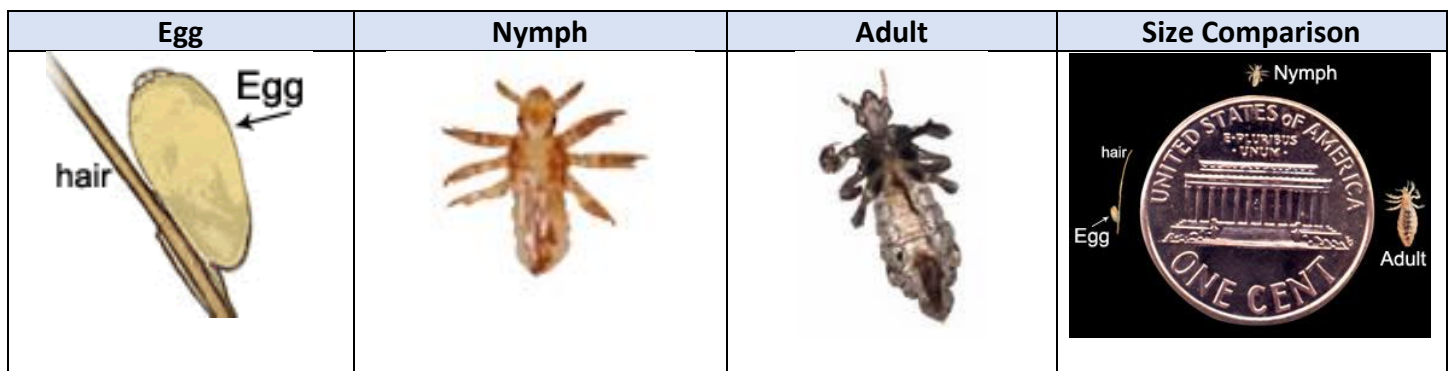
# Head Lice

## Head Lice Quick Reference

<b>Symptoms</b>	Sensation of something moving in the hair, itching, difficulty sleeping (lice are most active in the dark), sores on the head from scratching. Identification of lice in the hair.
<b>Mode of Transmission</b>	Lice cannot hop or fly – they move by crawling. Animals are not involved in the transmission of head lice that effects humans. Head lice are spread via direct contact with the hair of an infected person. Spread by indirect contact, such as from hats or other personal items, is uncommon.
<b>Treatment</b>	Over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications are available. Manual removal of lice is also helpful. Machine wash and dry clothing, bedding, and other clothing items using hot water and high heat when drying; soaks combs and brushes in hot water for 5-10 minutes; vacuum the floor and furniture; bag items that cannot be washed for two weeks; and avoid the use of fumigant sprays.
<b>When to Report to CCHHS</b>	Head lice is not a reportable condition in Washington State. Schools, childcare centers, and the public are always welcome to call CCHHS at 360-414-5599 (extension 6431) to discuss cases or get information but there is no reporting requirement.

### What do head lice look like?

Head lice have three forms: egg (also known as nit), the nymph, and the adult.



*Photos Courtesy of CDC*

## **Are children required to be excluded from school if they have head lice?**

No, children do not need to be excluded from school if they have head lice. If lice are identified during the school day, children can remain in school and go home at the end of the day. Students can return to school after the appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after initial treatment and exclusion from school is no longer recommended. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advocates for the discontinuation of “No Nit” policies in schools.

## **How can head lice be treated at home?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides a detailed breakdown of head lice treatment that can be reviewed [here](#). Over-the-counter (OTC) treatments can be purchased at many stores including pharmacies and most major retailers. Nit combs should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft to help support treatment. Fortunately, head lice do not survive long in the environment so extreme house cleaning is not required. These measures can be helpful to reduce the risk of re-infestation:

- Machine wash clothing and linen items in hot water and dry on high heat. Dry cleaning is also effective.
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (130 F) for 5-10 minutes.
- Vacuum flooring and furniture frequently used by the infested individual spend time.
- For items that cannot be washed, seal then in a plastic bag for two weeks.
- Avoid the use of fumigant sprays, they are toxic and not necessary since lice do not survive for long in the environment.

## **Additional Resources**

- CDC: [Head Lice](#)
  - [Treatment](#)
  - [Prevention & Control](#)
- OSPI: [Infectious Disease Control Guide for School Staff](#)