

**Dead nits** will cling to the hair and cause uncertainty about reinfestation. Products like **Clear** or vinegar should not be used to help loosen the nits after using permethrin-based pediculicide because they wash away the residual benefits of the insecticide, which can protect against reinfestation for up to 10 days. Nit removal is best accomplished using a special metal comb. Picking them out with fingernails is labor intensive and may result in missed nits. Hair with nits can also be cut out with small safety scissors (or the head shaved!).

√ Some so-called lice combs are actually cradle cap combs and are ineffective against nits. Nit removal is best accomplished with a metal nit comb while hair is slightly damp.

4. Following nit removal, have the child put on clean clothing and let the hair air-dry by itself.

5. A daily nit check is advisable for at least 10 days after treatment, and then checking should become part of routine hygiene. You may have to retreat in 7-10 days if there is evidence of new nits or newly-hatched lice. Regardless of precautions taken at home, reinfestation from others can still take place. Treatment itself can cause itching; do not retreat on the basis of itchiness alone. **A sign of successful treatment will be no new nits being found!**

Though nits are usually attached to the hair shaft near the scalp, evidence indicates they may be attached anywhere on the hair shaft. The old "1/4 inch rule" that says that "if no nits are found under 1/4 inch from the scalp the infestation is over," is no longer considered valid.

### Environmental and Personal Item Treatment

1. Machine wash all clothing and bed linens which may have been in contact with the infested person during the three days prior to treatment. Articles should be washed in **hot** water and dried in a hot dryer for twenty minutes. Non-washables can be vacuumed or dry cleaned.

2. "Bagging" is not necessary. Rugs, upholstered furniture, mattresses, car seats and any personal items

that cannot be washed, like stuffed animals, can be carefully vacuumed to pick up living lice or nits attached to fallen hairs.

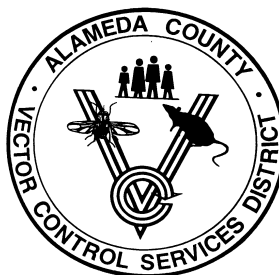
### Insecticides for The Home

We do not recommend the use of insecticidal sprays; because they may be harmful to family members and pets and are of questionable benefit.

### Special Head Lice Facts

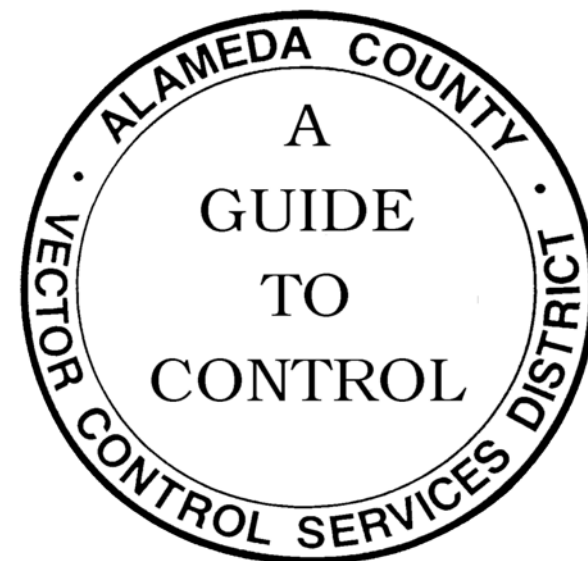
- ♣ No solvent (vinegar, etc.) will effectively dissolve the cement that holds nits to the hair.
- ♣ Carpets and furniture are not a favorable place for lice to live. They do not provide the warmth, food, or moisture needed for lice to survive.
- ♣ Personal cleanliness will not prevent head lice. Anyone can get them, whether clean or dirty.
- ♣ Head lice cannot survive off of their human host for much more than 3 days.
- ♣ An "extra-fine" flea comb for dogs, makes an effective nit comb.
- ♣ Alternative, or "natural" treatments are unstudied, and usually, of little value.

# HEAD LICE



For advice or help CALL:

**Alameda County Vector Control  
Services District  
1131 Harbor Bay Parkway Ste.166  
Alameda, CA 94502  
(510) 567-6800  
Web: <http://www.acvcsd.org>**



## Head Lice (*Pediculus humanus capitis*)

Head Lice have been a parasite of humans for as long as we have been keeping record, and long before that time. In recent years we are seeing more people with *head lice*, largely due to our increasing population density. Head lice should not be associated with unclean people or homes. Frequent bathing or shampooing will not prevent head lice or remove them once established. *Head Lice* cannot jump or fly and the most common mode of transmission is through contact with infested persons, their clothing or comb or brush. Household pets **do not** transmit head lice.

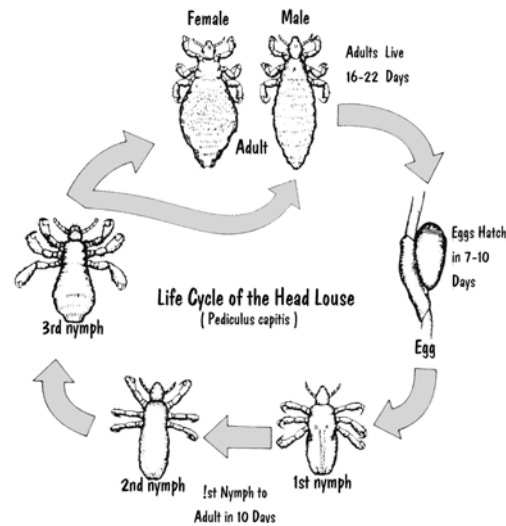
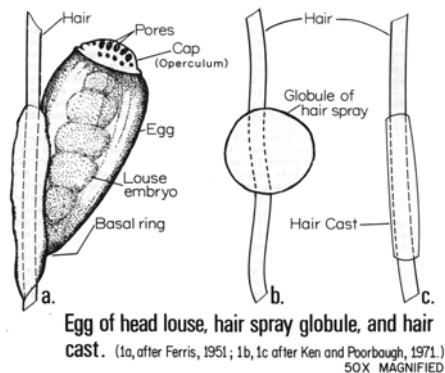
### Who gets Head Lice?

Anyone can get *head lice*, but they are most common in young, school age children. An infested person is more likely to pass *head lice* to those with whom contacts are more frequent and prolonged, such as family members or overnight visitors in the home. To a lesser extent, a child might get head lice from school mates or from objects like hats, pillows or hair grooming implements.

### What is a Head Louse?

A *Head Louse* is an insect that lives on the human scalp and feeds on their blood. While feeding, lice inject saliva into the skin which causes itching.

Head Lice are not known to transmit diseases under normal conditions! *Secondary infection may occur from scratching.*



### What to Look For:

If your child scratches his or her head frequently, or if you hear of head lice occurring on frequent visitors to your home, or on close friends of your child, inspect your child's hair for:

- ⇒ Nits on the hair. These look like tiny oval objects glued to the side of hair shafts. The length is less than 1/2 the diameter of the head of a pin.
- ⇒ Lice among the hair. Lice and nits are most likely to be found near the scalp where the hair is thickest, usually behind the ears, and around the nape of the neck. Lice avoid light. They grow from slightly larger than the nit, up to 1/8 inch in length.
- ⇒ Fecal specks on the collar. Brownish specks are more likely to be seen if the hair is long, the collar light-colored, and lice plentiful.
- ◆ HAIR CASTS (material from the hair follicles) may be mistaken for nits. Both nits and hair casts may be on the hair at the same time. A hair cast looks like a small collar or ball and slides easily along the hair shaft, and are not related to the louse problem.

### Treatment of the Individual:

**Safety** must come first when using pesticides, *always read and follow label directions!* Before one family member is treated, all should be examined. Only those showing evidence of infestation should be treated. Treat all affected individuals at the same time to prevent reinfestation from one family member to another. Individual treatment involves the use of a *pediculicidal* product **and** the use of a metal comb manufactured for the purpose of nit removal. *Permethrin cream-rinse formulations for head lice control are the most effective.* (Brand name or generic)

1. Remove child's shirt and use a towel to protect the eyes. Do not treat in the bathtub or shower, but have the child lean over the sink (this confines the lice product to the scalp and neck). When using Permethrin cream-rinse, you must shampoo with a detergent/stripping type of shampoo like Prell (*normal to oily version*) prior to use.

**Do not use shampoos that contain silicon, or other oil-based conditioners. These products may render the treatment ineffective by coating and protecting the nit or louse. Be sure the hair is only damp not wet!**

2. There are several remedies available at your pharmacy, over the counter or by prescription. **We do not recommend Lindane (Kwell), because of the documented adverse reactions.** Consult your pharmacist or physician if you are pregnant, nursing or have allergies, using medication, or discover lice or nits in the eyebrows or eyelashes. No pesticide should be used in the eye area. Avoid applying pesticides when there are open wounds on the scalp of the person to be treated or on the hands of the person who will apply the product.

3. **All the nits must be removed after treatment.** Nit removal may take an hour, or more, and be difficult, but to insure complete removal of all lice the nits must go. Permethrin is the most effective in killing the nits, but it is only 70-90% effective. The surviving nits will hatch in 7-10 days, and result in reinfestation.