



Lice Lessons

# Head Lice 101

An Overview for Parents, Teachers, & Communities

# Head Lice Fast Facts

## “ **Head lice are a common community issue**

- In the United States, an estimated 6 to 12 million lice infestations occur each year among children aged 3 to 11<sup>1</sup>
- Children can get head lice anytime they are in close contact with others – for example, during play at home or school, slumber parties, sports activities or camp

## “ **Head lice are wingless insects**

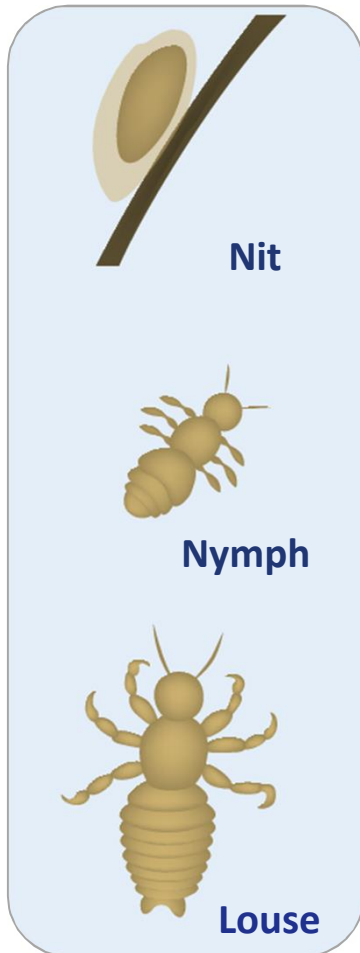
- They live close to the scalp and feed on human blood
- They are not dangerous and do not transmit disease but are easily spread<sup>1</sup>

## “ **School nurses are often the first to detect head lice**

- If head lice is suspected, it is important for families to talk to their healthcare provider



# What Are Head Lice?



Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp. When checking a student for head lice, you may see several forms:<sup>1</sup>

- **Nits (eggs)**
  - “ Teardrop shaped
  - “ Attached to the hair shaft
  - “ Yellowish or white
  - “ Can be confused with dandruff but cannot be brushed off
- **Nymph (baby louse)**
  - “ Grows to adult size in one to two weeks
  - “ Found on the scalp or in the hair
- **Adult louse**
  - “ Size of a sesame seed
  - “ Tan to grayish-white
  - “ Commonly behind the ears and near the neckline



# Who and How?



## Who gets head lice?

- “ Almost anyone can get head lice
- “ Head lice are not a health hazard or sign of poor hygiene<sup>2</sup>
- “ Children attending preschool or elementary school, and those who live with them, are the most commonly affected<sup>1</sup>

## How do head lice spread?

- “ Most often spread by direct head-to-head contact<sup>1</sup>
- “ Head lice cannot jump or fly<sup>1</sup>
- “ They cannot live off the head for long, so it is uncommon to spread head lice by contact with clothing or other personal items<sup>1</sup>
- “ Dogs, cats and other pets do not play a role in spreading head lice<sup>1</sup>



# Is It Head Lice?



“ Some people don’t experience symptoms, but those who do most commonly experience:<sup>1</sup>

- **Tickling** feeling on the scalp or in the hair
- **Itching** (caused by the bites of the louse)
- **Irritability and difficulty sleeping** (lice are more active in the dark)
- **Sores on the head** (caused by scratching)



“ Finding a live louse is the best indication of an infestation.<sup>3</sup>

- **Look for nits close to the scalp;** lice are most commonly found behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the head.



# I Identified a Live Louse. What Next?

## 5 Steps For Parents:

How to Manage an Active  
Head Lice Infestation

- ❑ Check the whole family for head lice.  
Anyone with evidence of an active lice infestation should be treated, and all persons with active head lice should be treated at the same time.<sup>5</sup>
- ❑ See your healthcare provider.
- ❑ Clean to remove lice from your house.
- ❑ Share the info with your child's school and the parents of other children your child may have come into contact with.

“ **If head lice are suspected, families should consult with a healthcare provider as soon as possible**

“ **Key treatment considerations include:**

- Resistance to some over-the-counter (OTC) head lice treatments has been reported, but the prevalence is not known<sup>2</sup>
- There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective<sup>4</sup>
- There are prescription treatment options available – caregivers should contact their child's healthcare professional to determine what is appropriate for them



## What About Cleaning?



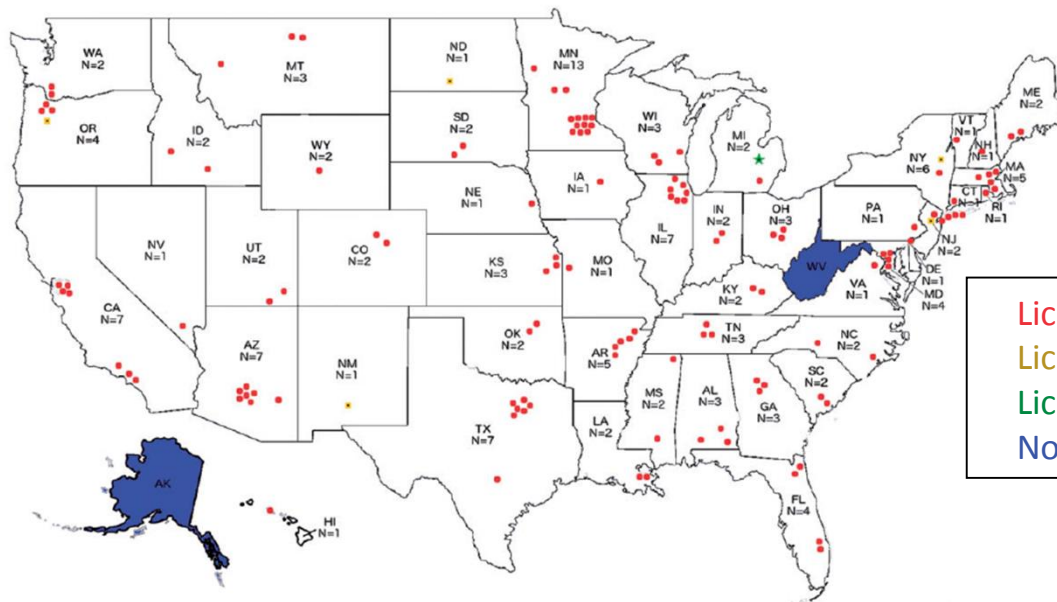
- “ Vacuum floor and furniture where the infested person sat or lay<sup>6</sup>
- “ Fumigants or fogs are not necessary and may be dangerous if inhaled or absorbed through the skin<sup>6</sup>
- “ Family bed linens and recently used clothes, hats and towels, as well as personal articles such as combs, brushes and hair clips should be washed in very hot water<sup>5</sup>
- “ Items that can't be washed should be sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks<sup>5</sup>



# 2016: Frequency of U.S. Lice with Treatment-Resistant Gene<sup>7</sup>

- “ Between July 2013 and May 2015, lice from 48 states were collected to be tested
  - (138 geographic collection sites, ranging from rural to metropolitan areas)
- “ These samples were used to determine the extent and magnitude of lice resistance to the pyrethrin or pyrethroid insecticides commonly used in some over-the-counter (OTC) lice treatments
- “ 100% of lice in 42 states samples (88%) were found to have the resistant gene

**This indicated that lice that have the treatment-resistant gene are widely present in the US**



Lice with resistant gene = 100%  
Lice with resistant gene = 50-99%  
Lice with resistant gene = 0%  
No population analyzed



# Supporting Families Facing Head Lice

- “ Children and parents managing head lice may feel stigmatized and ostracized<sup>8,9</sup>
  
- “ We can all help support families facing head lice by:
  - Dispelling myths
  - Maintaining privacy
  - Keeping kids in school
  - Encouraging families to talk to their health care provider
  
- “ If you want to learn more, contact your school nurse for more *Lice Lessons* resources or visit [NASN.org](http://NASN.org)!



***The Lice Lessons educational initiative is made possible  
through a collaboration between the  
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**Lice Lessons**



# References

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