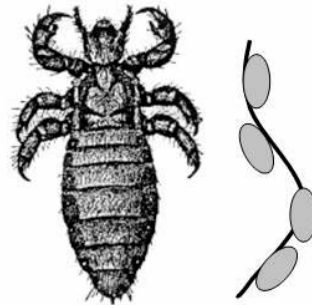


# LICE FACTSHEET

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Adult louse (left) and Eggs on hair (right)

[Pest Management Office 491 College Ave, Orono, ME]

## What are head lice?

Also called *Pediculus humanus capitis* (peh-DICK-you-lus HUE-man-us CAP-ih-TUS), head lice are parasitic insects found on the heads of people. Having head lice is very common; as many as 6-12 million people worldwide get head lice each year.

## Who is at risk for getting head lice?

Anyone who comes in close contact with someone who already has head lice, contaminated clothing, and other belongings (brushes, combs, hats, clothes, etc). Preschool and elementary-age children, 3-10, and their families are infested most often. Girls get head lice more often than boys, women more than men.

## What do head lice look like?

There are 3 forms of lice: the nit, the nymph, and the adult.

**Nit:** Nits are head lice eggs. They are hard to see and are often confused for dandruff or hair spray droplets. Nits are found firmly attached to the hair shaft. They are oval and usually yellow to white. Nits take about 1 week to hatch.

**Nymph:** The nit hatches into a baby louse called a nymph. It looks like an adult head louse, but is smaller. Nymphs mature into adults about 7 days after hatching. To live, the nymph must feed on blood.

**Adult:** The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has 6 legs, and is tan to greyish-white. In persons with dark hair, the adult louse will look darker. Females lay nits; they are usually larger than males. Adult lice can live up to 30 days on a person's head.

To live, adult lice need to feed on blood. If the louse falls off a person, it dies within 2 days.

## Where are head lice most commonly found?

On the scalp behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the neck. Head lice hold on to hair with hook-like claws found at the end of each of their six legs. Head lice are rarely found on the body, eyelashes, or eyebrows.

## What are the signs and symptoms of head lice infestation?

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites.
- Irritability.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

It may take as long as two to three weeks or longer for a person to notice the intense itching associated with this infestation.

## For how long is a person able to spread pediculosis?

Pediculosis can be spread as long as lice or eggs remain alive on the infested person or clothing.

## Want more information?

This information is from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additional information about Lice and other related health topics can be found at the website [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call (202) 442-5893.

