



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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## FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE.

### The Basics of Head Lice

In order to prevent the spread of head lice, all parents or guardians should routinely check their child for head lice infestation. Head lice are a common community issue. Lice are wingless insects that crawl. They cannot jump. Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene. They are most often spread by head-to-head contact. Not everyone experiences symptoms, but common signs are itching, scratch marks on the scalp, or a tickling feeling on the scalp.

Finding a live louse is the best indication of an infestation. Lice are difficult to see because they crawl very quickly. To check for evidence of lice, look for nits, or eggs that are attached to the hair shaft close to the scalp. Nits are teardrop in shape and are not removed easily. They must be slid down the hair shaft to the end in order to remove them. Also difficult to see are nymphs, or newly hatched lice.

If head lice are suspected, families should consult their physician for treatment options and all family members and other close contacts should be checked. Prevention measures include encouraging children to not share objects that touch the head such as hats, combs, etc.

See [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for further information.



## PEDICULOSIS FACTS AND TREATMENT GUIDE

***Head lice can happen to anyone.*** It is not a sign of poor health habits or being dirty. Head lice can occur at any age and to either sex. It does not just happen to “other people.” It could happen to you or your family. Learn how to recognize head lice, how to treat it and how to prevent it from happening again.

***What are head lice?*** They are small, grayish-white to brown insects. They live in human hair. They hatch from small, pearly white eggs called nits. The nits are attached to the base of the hair shaft. The eggs hatch in about 7-10 days. New lice mature in about two weeks. The female louse can live for 20 to 30 days, and can lay as many as six to ten eggs per day.

***What signs should I look for?*** Persistent itching of the head, back of the neck and behind the ears can indicate head lice. You should also look for scratch marks or a rash on the scalp.

Sometimes, small white specks in the hair, such as dandruff, can be confused as nits. Try removing the specks from the hair shaft with your fingers. If it is dandruff flakes or droplets of hair spray, they will remove easily. Nits are very difficult to remove. Check with a health professional if you have any doubt whether head lice are present.

***How does someone get head lice?*** A person can get head lice by direct head to head contact or by borrowing a comb or brush from an infested person. Head lice can be spread by borrowing hats, ribbons, scarves or other head coverings. Sharing of towels or pillowcases can also spread head lice.

A common myth is that head lice jump and fly. This is incorrect. They can only crawl.

### Treatment of infested individuals

Head lice are not removed by water, regular shampoo or dandruff shampoo. Shampoos to kill head lice are available at your local pharmacy. Certain head lice shampoos are not to be used by individuals allergic to ragweed or with a history of asthma or epilepsy. Pregnant women or children under the age of two should not use the head lice shampoo unless directed by physician. Consult your physician for treatment options.

Head lice shampoo should be applied according to its labeled instructions.

**Nit removal.** Suggested methods for removal of nits include fine tooth combs or using fingernails to slide the nits down and off the hair shaft. Divide the hair into sections and work with a small section at a time. Hold the small section of the hair by the ends and comb from the scalp out towards the end of the hair. Place removed nits in a plastic bag and seal. Check the scalp and hair daily for at least the next 2 weeks. Repeat shampooing in 7 to 10 days if directed by physician. This will kill the lice that hatch from nits not killed since the initial treatment. Continue to check the head and hair every 1-2 days.

**Never use gasoline or kerosene as a treatment!** These products are flammable and can cause serious burns.

**Treatment of household contacts.** Treat other family members only if you see lice or nits on their hair. If an individual does not have any signs or symptoms of head lice, do not use the head lice shampoo as a preventative measure.

**Treatment of environment and personal articles.** All clothing, headgear, towels, bed linen and stuffed toys or animals used by the infested person should be cleaned.

Wash items in very hot water or the hot cycle in the washing machine for at least 20 minutes. Dry on hot cycle for 20 minutes too.

Items that cannot be washed can be sealed in plastic bags for 14 days or dry-cleaned.

Clean combs and brushes in hot water (over 130°) for 5-10 minutes.  
(Water may be kept at this temperature, by placing the pan containing the combs/brushes on the stove under low heat. Do not leave unattended.)

Vacuum upholstered furniture, carpet, mattresses, pillows and car upholstery.

**\*Remember,** head lice survive on humans—not on family pets.

Your child can be re-admitted to school as allowed by the individual school district policy.

Should any questions arise, please call your physician.

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/prevent.html>