



Information Sheets for Parents – Health Fact Sheet

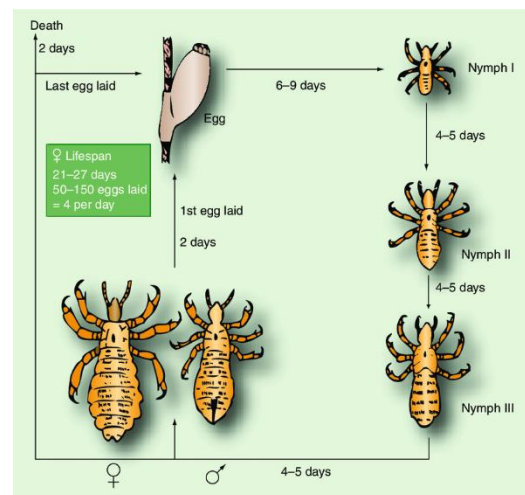
Head Lice

National Quality Standard – Quality Area 2

Element 2.1.2 – Health Practices and Procedures – Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

Description:

Head lice are insects that live in hair and suck blood from the scalp. They are a nuisance because they can cause itching of the scalp, but they do not cause disease or illness. Female head lice lay their eggs and glue them to the base of hair shafts. The eggs are pale cream to yellowish brown in colour and hatch after 7–10 days. The immature lice grow into adults over 6–10 days and start biting the scalp to feed on blood. Adult lice mate, the females lay more eggs, and the cycle begins again.



How does it spread?

Head lice can only be spread from one person to another by direct head-to-head contact—the lice cannot jump or fly. Head lice do not live or breed on animals, bedding, furniture, carpets, clothes or soft toys. They cannot spread by sharing hats.

Incubation period:

Head lice eggs take 7–10 days to hatch, and adult lice can lay new eggs after another 6–10 days. The lice in a person's hair can be at various stages of their life cycle, so new eggs can be laid and new lice can hatch continuously.

Infectious period:

As long as the eggs or lice are alive, they can spread to other people by direct head-to-head contact.

Exclusion period:

The child may return to the preschool as soon as a treatment is used and all the lice are dead

Responsibilities of parents:

- Check your child's head once a week for head lice. If you find any lice or eggs, begin treatment immediately. Check for effectiveness of the treatment every 2 days until no lice are found for 10 consecutive days.
- Repeat the treatment after 1 week.
- Wash hats, bedding, vacuum bedroom floor, particularly under the bed.
- You may send your child back to the Preschool as soon as effective treatment has started.
- Check for head lice in other family members as well.

Controlling the spread of infection:

- Educate staff, children and parents about head lice.
- Recommend that staff and children tie back long hair to reduce the chance of spread.

Treatment:

Adult lice are difficult to see; look for eggs by shining a strong light on the hair near the scalp, or using the conditioner and combing technique:

1. Untangle dry hair with an ordinary comb.
2. Apply hair conditioner to dry hair (white conditioner makes it easier to see the eggs). Use enough conditioner to cover the whole scalp and all the hair from roots to tips.
3. Use an ordinary comb to evenly distribute the conditioner, and divide the hair into four or more sections using hair clips.
4. Starting with a section at the back of the head, place the teeth of a head lice comb flat against the scalp. Comb the hair from the roots through to the tips.
5. Wipe the comb clean on a tissue after each stroke and check for head lice or eggs on the tissue.
6. Comb each section twice until you have combed the whole head. If the comb becomes clogged, use an old toothbrush, dental floss or a safety pin to remove the head lice or eggs.

The conditioner and combing technique is also an effective head lice treatment. Keep combing the whole head until all the conditioner is gone. Repeat the process daily until no lice or eggs have been found for 10 days. Chemical treatments are also available for head lice—your pharmacist can help you choose a product

For further information: [Staying Healthy in Child Care](#)