



Head Lice: Information for Public Health Nurses

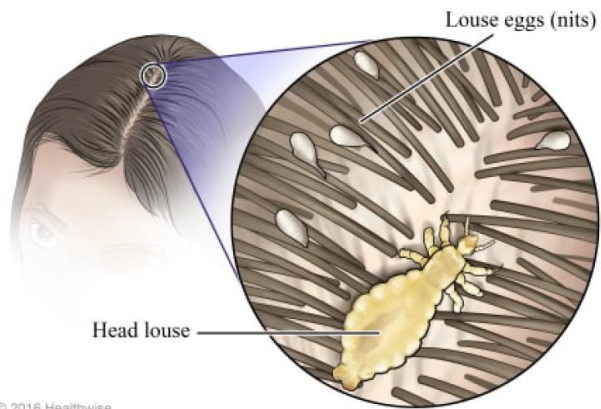
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February 2025

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What is Head Lice?



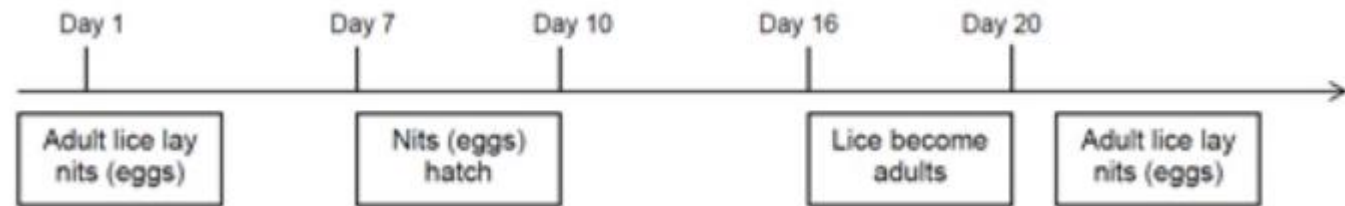
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Image obtained from: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=abr86o>

- **Lice** are tiny insects that live on the human scalp and feed on blood
- They lay eggs (i.e. called '**nits**') on the scalp
- You **cannot** pick them off or brush them away
 - can be mistaken for dandruff, which brushes away
- What do they look like?
 - lice are tan to greyish white in color
 - very tiny (about the size of a sesame seed)
 - nits are tiny yellow/white dots attached to the hair, close to root
- Can be found anywhere on the human head
 - crawl fast, making them hard to spot
 - easiest to find **behind the neck** or **the ears**
 - a magnifying glass can help

Head Lice Life Cycle

- It is important to understand the life cycle of head lice because it *impacts* treatment
- **Only** adult lice lay nits (eggs)
- **Nits** take between 7 to 10 days to hatch
- After hatching, they become **adult lice** in 6 to 10 days



Images obtained from: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=abr86o>

Lice: Common Misconceptions Clarified



- They are not dangerous
- Do not spread disease
- Have nothing to do with how '*clean*' a person is
- Cannot survive off of the human scalp
- Cannot live on or spread by pets/animals
- Cannot fly, jump, or swim
- Natural treatments (i.e. tea tree/coconut oil) **do not** effectively treat lice

Symptoms of Head Lice and how it Spreads

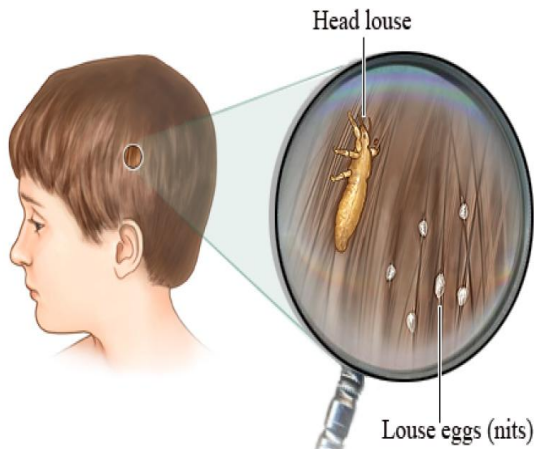


Image obtained from: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=abr860>

- May cause an itchy feeling on the scalp
 - *not everyone* has itching as a symptom
- Lice can be present for 4-6 weeks **before** itching starts
- Avoid scratching the head
 - can cause skin tears/lesions and lead to infection
- Lice spreads when an infected persons head comes into **close contact** with another persons head
 - **ex:** sleep in the same bed, share hats/toques, use the same hair brushes, combs, or accessories, etc.

Note: you can't get lice just by being in the same space or room with someone who has it

Detection Combing



- If lice is suspected, nurses should encourage parents to perform '**detection combing**' on their child
- Direct parents to the 'MyHealth Alberta' website for ***step-by-step instructions*** on how to:
<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/alberta/Pages/how-to-treat-head-lice.aspx>
- Lice detection combs are available from the pharmacy
 - a sturdy, fine tooth comb could work as well
- If lice is suspected, refer the client to a ***pharmacy*** for treatment options

Image obtained from: Frist Nations Telehealth Network, TSAG

'Detection
Combing' is
*No Longer a
Common
Practice* within
Nursing

- While 'detection combing' is within the CRNA/CLPNA scope, it is no longer a standard nursing practice
- Nurses should *still* assist families with questions about head lice and guide them accordingly
- Transferred Nations are welcome to discuss further with their health directors to decide what is best for their community

Treatment Options

- Lice shampoos/creams are **safe** and **effective** treatments
- They **are covered** by the NIHB
- A prescription is **not** required
- Treatment is available **over the counter (OTC)**
 - i.e. clients need to approach the pharmacist to dispense it
- Lice shampoo instructions vary based on product/brand
 - clients ***must follow the directions exactly as listed***
 - ex: should the hair be wet or dry? Is a 2nd treatment needed?
- After treatment, clients can remove any remaining 'nits' with a detection comb (*nits that were not killed, could still hatch*)
- Clients should check for ***active lice 12h after*** treatment
 - if still present, consult a doctor/NP for other treatment options

Prevention

- If one person in a family has lice, it is likely others do too
 - important to check ***everyone*** for head lice
- If **sharing a bed** with someone, they should be treated too
- Educate parents to teach their kids **not to share items** that come into contact with hair
 - ex: hair bands, towels, hats, helmets, combs, brushes, etc.
- Encourage families to:
 - soak hairbrushes/combs in *very hot water* for 10 minutes
 - machine wash clothes, bedding, towels, etc. and dry on a hot cycle
 - if no washing machine, store items a sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks
 - vacuum carpets, mattresses, couches, furniture, etc.

Note: school-age clients who have head lice, can continue to attend classes (exclusion is not required)

AHS Video Clip



'How to Check for and Manage Head Lice'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8XTgtMwOdy>

Resources to share with Parents



MyHealth Alberta

- Head Lice: Condition Basics
<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=abr86064>
- Head Lice: How to Treat Head Lice
<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/alberta/Pages/how-to-treat-head-lice.aspx>

Alberta Health Service

- Head Lice and how to treat them
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/school/if-sch-sh-head-lice-and-how-to-treat-them.pdf>

These resources are available in printable format

References

Alberta Health Services. June 2016. Head lice and how to treat them. Retrieved from:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/school/if-sch-sh-head-lice-and-how-to-treat-them.pdf>

MyHealth Alberta. November 16, 2023. Head lice. Retrieved from:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=abr86064>

MyHealth Alberta. July 25, 2023. How to treat head lice. Retrieved

from: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/alberta/Pages/how-to-treat-head-lice.aspx>

Other Nursing Updates

New 'CHN' Orientation page available on OneHealth

New resource for 'school nurses' to help answer teacher and student health questions (next slide)

ALBERTA / NWT - FIRST NATIONS
HEALTH PORTAL
OUR PEOPLE, OUR HEALTH

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

RESOURCE FINDER

Home Alberta Region Community Health Promotion Privacy Compliance Communicable Disease Control **Nursing** Nutrition WebMail

Nursing Community Health Nursing CHN Orientation

PHN Orientation Guides

- [Immunization & Well Child Program \(2 – 59 months\) Guide](#)
- [Immunization & Well Child Program \(2 – 59 months\) Summary Sheet](#)
- [Community Postpartum Program \(0-2 months\) Guide](#)
- [Community Postpartum Program \(0-2 months\) Summary Sheet](#)

Public Health Newsletters

- [Winter 2025](#)
- [Fall 2024](#)
- [Summer 2024](#)
- [Spring 2024](#)
- [Winter 2024](#)

Nurse Advisor Competency Assessments

- [Part B-RN Immunization Competency Assessment](#)
- [Part B-LPN Immunization Competency Assessment](#)
- [Part B-Adult Only Immunization Competency Assessment](#)
- [Part C-Well Child Skills Assessment \(RN only\)](#)

Well Child and Postpartum Documents

- [Role of a Well Child Clinic Orientation Nurse](#)

Nursing dropdown menu:

- About Nursing
- Nursing Manuals, Policies & Guidelines
- Nursing Education Resources
- Home Care Nursing
- Community Health Nursing**
- CHN Forms
- CHN Orientation**

NEW

School Nurse Resource List

- Intended to support school nurses with a variety of health topics/issues that present in the ***school setting***
- Will **assist** school nurses in:
 - answering teacher's health questions or education inquiries
 - meeting students health needs in the school setting
- Topics include:
 - allergies, asthma, diabetes, substance use, smoking/vaping, sexual health and pregnancy, immunizations, mental health, social supports, etc.

First Nation and Inuit Health Branch – Alberta Region
School Nursing Resource List

Addictions / Opioids / Substance Use	
Alberta Adolescent Recovery Center (AARC) (Calgary zone)	https://aarc.ab.ca
AHS Youth Recovery Program (Edmonton zone)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=1084617&serviceAtFacilityID=1134800
<i>Recovery program for youth (long term, semi-residential, 12 step model)</i>	
Addictions Tool Kit for Educators (AHS)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page14610.aspx
<i>Facilitates teachers connections with community partners to raise awareness</i>	
Drug Safe (AHS)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/dsa/
<i>Find safety information on a variety of drugs and alcohol</i>	
Allergies and Anaphylaxis	
Anaphylaxis in Schools	https://foodallergyCanada.ca/tools-and-dov-resources/anaphylaxis-in-schools-guidelines
<i>National guideline for anaphylaxis management in Canadian schools</i>	
Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan	https://foodallergyCanada.ca/tools-and-dov-plan-forms/
<i>Plan for teachers that lists students allergies, signs/symptoms, and response</i>	
Protection of Students with Life Threatening Allergies Act (Gov't of Alberta)	https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents
Asthma	
Asthma in Schools	https://asthma.ca/get-help/asthma-in-child
<i>Information for parents, teachers, and healthcare staff on asthma in school</i>	
Student Asthma Action Plan	https://asthma.ca/get-help/living-with-asth
<i>Develop a personalized plan for managing student asthma in school</i>	
Concussion	
Concussion Awareness Training for School Professionals	https://catonline.com/course/concussion-school-professionals
<i>Module for teachers to learn about the management of concussions in school</i>	
What is a Concussion?	https://parachute.ca/en/injury-topic/concu
<i>Learn about the signs and symptoms of a concussion and how to support</i>	
Concussion Tools and Resources (AHS)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/
<i>Variety of concussion education resources, including return to school guides</i>	

First Nation and Inuit Health Branch – Alberta Region
School Nursing Resource List

Nutrition	
Teach Nutrition	https://alberta.teachnutrition.ca/en/
<i>Free nutrition resources developed by Registered Dietitians for teachers</i>	
Healthy Eating at School: Resources for Educators (AHS)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page2925.aspx
<i>Resources for teachers to facilitate healthy eating patterns among students</i>	
Creating Healthy Eating Environments in School (AHS)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/page2915.aspx
<i>Additional resources that support healthy eating practices in school settings</i>	
Oral Health	
Children's Oral Health Initiative (COHI)	https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health/childrens-oral-health-initiative
<i>Tooth decay prevention program for <7 years, caregivers, pregnant women</i>	
Dental Benefits Guide for First Nation, Metis, and Inuit (Health Canada)	https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1579538771806/1579538804799
<i>Reviews NIHB dental coverage for eligible indigenous clients</i>	
Oral Health Education Tool Kit for Teachers (AHS)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/oh/Page13173.aspx
<i>Supports teachers in helping their students achieve good oral health</i>	
Seizures / Epilepsy	
Epilepsy in School	https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/health-conditions-and-treatments/epilepsy-at-school
<i>Epilepsy management in school settings and action plans</i>	
Epilepsy 101	https://epilepsycalgary.com/education/
<i>What is epilepsy, education in schools, action plan, and video demonstration</i>	
Sexual Health	
Aboriginal Sexual Health (do we include this link if connection not private?)	https://www.aboriginalsexualhealth.ca/index_e.aspx
<i>Support Aboriginal females with culturally safe sexual health education</i>	
Native Youth Sexual Health Network: Toolkits	https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/toolkits
<i>Variety of toolkits designed to support Indigenous sexual health</i>	
Sexual and Reproductive Health Resources (AHS)	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page16417.aspx
<i>Variety of resources and health services available in the province</i>	
	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services/page13737.aspx

Available on
OneHealth



Thank
YOU

Questions? Contact us:

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