

## Head Lice In A Nutshell



1. If bugs are found, the student goes home to be treated. The student should be rechecked upon return to school.
2. If eggs are found and the student has not been treated, the student goes home to be treated. The student should be rechecked upon return to school.
3. If eggs are found and the student has been treated, the student goes back to class.
4. Eggs hatch in 10-14 days. In 9-12 days they will reproduce. The cycle repeats itself every 3 weeks. Lice will live less than 2 days off of the head.
5. Scratching is caused by the louse piercing the scalp and injecting small amounts of saliva and taking tiny amounts of blood from the scalp every few hours. This saliva causes the itchy irritation. Scratching leads to secondary bacterial skin infections.
6. There is no scientific consensus on the best way to control head lice infestation in school children. No pediculocide is 100% ovicidal, and resistance has been reported with lindane, pyrethrins, and permethrin. (National Association of School Nurses and the American Academy of Pediatrics) Lindane should never be used; it is associated with seizures. The Utah Department of Health has banned the use of Lindane. Use of occlusive agents such as Vaseline, olive oil, and mayonnaise is not recommended because they are not effective.
7. Head Lice Screening Programs (School-Wide or by Classroom) and No-Nit Policies are not recommended or endorsed by the Harvard School of Public Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, the National Association of School Nurses, and the Utah State Department of Health. Why?
  - Head checks do not have a significant effect on the incidence of head lice in the school setting over time. The lice problem neither becomes any better or worse, whether head checks are done or not.
  - Screening for nits is not an accurate way of predicting which children will become infested. Only 18% of children with nits alone will convert to an active infestation. Children having 5 nits or more within 1 cm of the scalp are significantly more likely to develop an infestation, still only one-third of these higher-risk children will convert. Generally, around 30% of school children with nits will end up with an active case of lice.
  - Students can be screened in the morning and go to play with an infested friend in the afternoon and bring back lice to the classroom the next morning.
  - The bugs do not jump or fly, but they crawl very fast (6-30 cm per minute). It is extremely easy to miss bugs during a screening.
  - The most effective screening occurs when parents check their own children at home, treat if any are found, and make efforts to remove the nits.
8. There are 6 million reported cases of head lice infestations per year. The real estimation is closer to 12 million.



