

# PEDICULOSIS

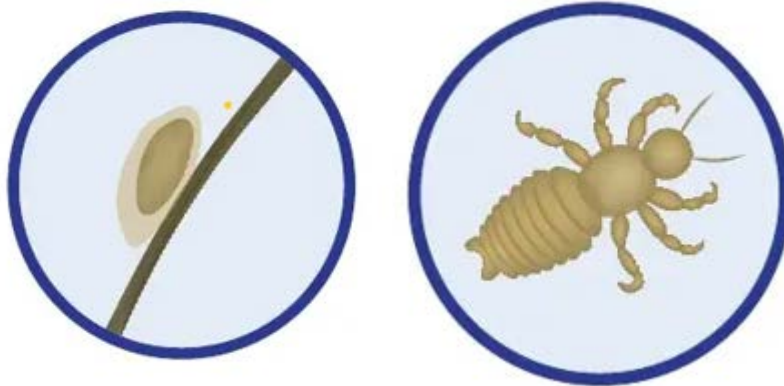


## Life cycle of the louse

The head louse is a small insect, of whitish-gray color, without wings, with body flattened and the legs equipped with hooks which allow it to attach strongly to hair and fur in general; it is also equipped with a buccal apparatus suitable for piercing the skin and suck its blood. It's a parasite, an organism that lives "at the expense" of other organisms and feeds by stinging the affected part of the body.

It lives and reproduces only on humans (hair, eyelashes, eyebrows, beard), favoring the area of the nape and the back the ear.

The female louse, for 3-4 weeks old, it lays a number of eggs (nits) which varies between 100 and 300. The nits, whitish in color, have a shape ovoid and about 1 millimeter long, they are attached to the hair shaft, a few millimeters away from the scalp, with a natural glue, difficult to untie, and follow the growth of hair.



After 6-10 days they hatch, giving rise to a nymph that after another **7-13 days** becomes an adult louse. Once removed from the scalp the parasite does not survive more than 24 – 48 hours.

## Symptoms

The main symptom, which may be missed, is **itching**, caused by an allergic reaction to the saliva of the parasite.

Transmission occurs, above all, by contact directly head-to-head or indirectly through the contact with personal effects such as combs, brushes, hats, scarves, etc. It takes approximately 30 seconds for a louse to transfer from one head to another.

**School attendance is only possible after completing the treatment.**

## Prevention

**It is impossible to completely prevent the lice infestations.**

Children, especially way in communities, tend to have frequent direct and prolonged contacts between their heads and is possible the exchange of personal objects.

The following preventive measures have proven good effectiveness:

- implement a **careful surveillance**, with inspections (particularly on the nape of the neck and behind the ears) every time you wash your head, to exclude the presence of nits. The use of a fine-toothed comb is also useful in this phase.
- educate children to avoid exchanging personal items such as combs, hats, scarves, ribbons, hair clips, etc.).
- carry out a systematic check on all family members, especially children, in case of infestation.**

## What should I do if I think my child has head lice?

### **Advise as soon as possible the Medical Service**

1.You can take care of your child's head lice problem at home without a visit to the doctor or clinic. Treatment should be with shampoo or cream rinse approved by AIFA that can be purchased without a prescription at the drug store, grocery store or other places that carry drug store products.

2. Many parents feel embarrassed when their child has lice. Sometimes it helps to talk to someone who can offer extra help. The nurse at your child's school, your physician and even the pharmacist can help. It is important to remember that infestation is not affected by the length of the hair; it

is not a sign of dirt and can be found in all social groups. Pediculosis does not represent a health hazard and not transmits any type of disease.

3. After the first treatment, you may not see live lice, but you might see nits. If the nits (or lice eggs) are attached to strands of hair  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch or less from the scalp, they are probably not dead. This means live lice could still be living somewhere on your child's head; or soon will hatch from the remaining eggs (as already mentioned it is a cycle, if you do not remove the nits, lice will be back). That's why, after treatment, it is important to comb out the nits left in your child's hair with a special nit comb available to pick up where you buy lice treatment.

5. Nits are very tiny; about the size of a knot in a thread. They are shaped like a long football, yellow to white in color and are often mistaken for dandruff or hair spray droplets. They attach to a hair at the scalp with a waterproof, cement-like substance. That's why they can be difficult to remove.

6. You may find nits first on the hairs at the "nape" of the neck and behind the ears. But they can live anywhere; so, look all over the scalp.

7. A second treatment and then a second combing are necessary. Even after thoroughly using the nit comb, live lice or nits could still be hiding somewhere on your child's head. All products specifically created to treat head lice will recommend a second treatment anywhere from 7 to 10 days after the first treatment in order to kill any remaining or newly hatched lice.

#### **8. Perform a systematic check on all family members.**

9. Wash sheets, pillowcases, and clothing with hot water (above 54°C); the leaders of clothing that cannot be water washed will need to be laundered dry or stored and closed in plastic bags for 10 days.

10. Immerse brushes and combs in hot water at least 54° C for at least 5 minutes or treat them with the product used to kill the lice.

5. Vacuum the sofas, carpets, and car seats.