

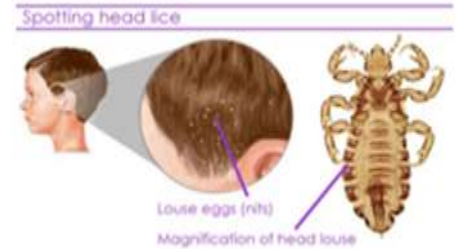
Prevention and Control Measures: Head Lice

Transmission:

- Head lice are spread by direct contact with the hair of an infested person, with close head to head contact being the most common way to spread.
- Head-to-head contact is common during play at school, at home, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, and camp). Although uncommon, head lice can be spread by sharing clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) or other personal items (such as combs, brushes, or towels).
- Infestation with head lice is most common among pre-school children attending childcare, elementary school children, and the household members of infested children.

Symptoms:

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching caused by an allergic reaction to the bites of the head lice.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping; head lice are most active in the dark.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching, which can sometimes become infected with bacteria normally found on a person's skin.
- Infestations can be asymptomatic, particularly with a first infestation or when the infestation is light.



Prevention and Control Measures:

- Avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities at home, school and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, camp).
- Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons, or barrettes. Do not share combs, brushes, or towels. Disinfect combs & brushes by soaking in hot water (at least 130 degrees F) for 5-10 minutes.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, or linens that have been in contact with an infested person.
- Lice can be spread if lice or eggs remain viable on the infested person or on clothing/surfaces. An adult life span is approximately one month. Lice eggs remain viable on clothing for 1 month. Head lice can survive for about 2 days after falling off a person. Nymphs can survive 24 hours without feeding. Under suitable conditions, eggs can remain viable away from the host for up to 7-10 days.
- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that an infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water (130 degrees F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle. Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. Routine vacuuming of floors and furniture is sufficient to remove lice or nits that may have fallen off of an infested person.
- Insecticide sprays, fumigant sprays or fogs are NOT recommended.
- According to CDC, children diagnosed with head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment.
- Both over the counter and prescription products are available. You may wish to contact your doctor, pharmacist, or health department for additional information about which product they recommend.

For More Information: Visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and type [Head Lice](#) in the SEARCH box.



Alabama Department of Public Health
Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104
alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases