



Head Lice Infestation

What to do?

Information & Treatment

NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION

Office of Public Information



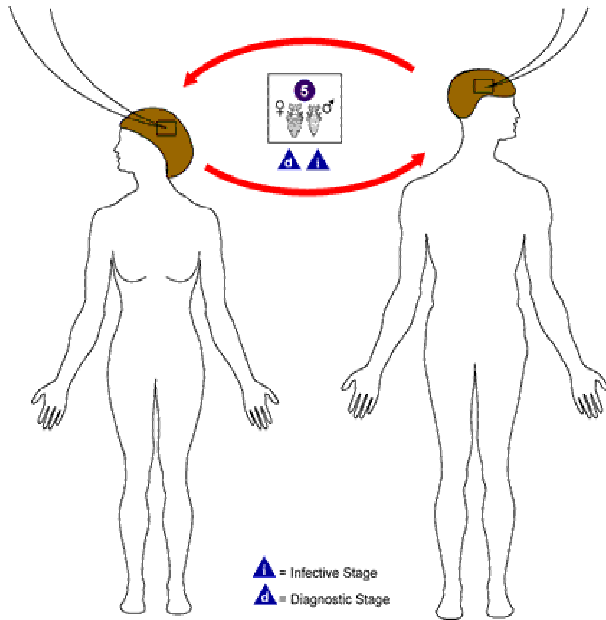
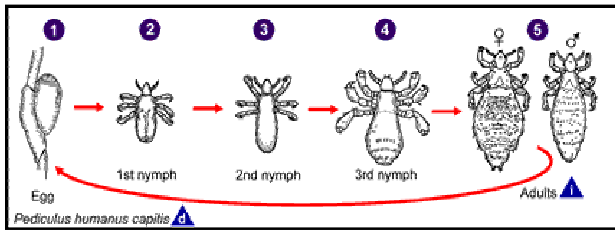
Please visit our Website:

Health2k.state.nv.us

(775) 684-4200

Don't panic! Head lice infestation is very common and is distributed worldwide; 6 to 12 million people may be affected yearly. Preschool and elementary-age children, 3 to 10 years of age are infested most often.

What are head lice? Also called *Pediculus humanus capitis*, head lice are parasitic insects found on the heads of people. There are three forms of lice: the nit, the nymph, and the adult.



Who is at risk for getting head lice? Anyone who comes in close contact with someone who already has head lice, contaminated clothing, and other belongings. Preschool and elementary-age children, 3-10, and their families are infested most often. Girls get head lice more often than boys, women more than men. In the United States, African-Americans rarely get head lice.

Where are head lice most commonly found? On the scalp behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the neck. Head lice hold on to hair with hook-like claws found at the end of each of their six legs. Head lice are rarely found on the body, eyelashes, or eyebrows.

What are the signs and symptoms? Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair. Itching, caused by the allergic reaction to the bites. Irritability. Sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected.

How does one become infected? By contact with an already infested person. Contact is common during play at school and at home such as slumber parties, sports activities, at camp, on a playground. By wearing infected clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, or sharing hair ribbons. By the use and sharing of infested combs, brushes, or towels. By lying on a bed, couch, pillow, carpet, or stuffed animal that has recently been in contact with an infested person

How is head lice diagnosed? Diagnosis should be made by a health care provider, school nurse, or a professional from the local health department or agricultural extension service. Head lice can be found by looking closely through the hair and scalp for nits, nymphs, or adults. Finding a nymph or adult may be difficult; there are usually few of them and they can move quickly from searching fingers. If crawling lice are not seen, finding nits within a ¼ inch of the scalp confirms that a person is infested and should be treated

How can I treat head lice infestation? There are many over-the-counter remedies available. The Nevada State Health Division suggests you contact your physician regarding effective and safe treatment plans.

Treat the household:

Head lice do not live long if they fall off a person. You do not need to spend a lot of time or money on house cleaning activities. Follow these steps to help avoid re-infestation by lice that have recently fallen off the hair or crawled onto clothing or furniture.

To kill lice and nits, machine-wash all washable clothing and bed linens that the infested person has worn or slept on during the 2 days before treatment. Use the hot water (130° F) cycle. Dry laundry using high heat for at least 20 minutes. Dry clean clothing worn 2 days before treatment if it is not washable, (coats, hats, scarves, etc.) or store all clothing, stuffed animals, comforters, etc., that cannot be washed or dry cleaned into a plastic bag and seal for 2 weeks. Soak combs and brushes for 1 hour in rubbing alcohol, Lysol®, or wash with soap and hot (130° F) water. Vacuum the floor and furniture. Do not use fumigant sprays; they can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

If my child has head lice, can he/she go to school? You need to check your school district policy regarding head lice. Usually, the school nurse is the point of contact.

Point of Contact:

Clark County Health District, (702) 385-1291
Community Health Nurses (Statewide), Ask for Name/Telephone Number for your County, (775) 684-4221