

LICE (PEDICULOSIS)



Pediculus Capitis, also known as head louse, is a wingless, parasitic insect that feeds on the blood of humans. Lice do not transmit disease, however, they can cause discomfort and psychological distress for clients. Understanding the insect's life cycle, how lice are transmitted, and evidence-based treatment methods can help efficiently treat infestations and avoid recurrence.

Transmission

Lice spread from person to person during direct contact, via contact with clothing or through sharing of personal care items like towels and hair brushes. Lice cannot jump or fly. They crawl from person to person.

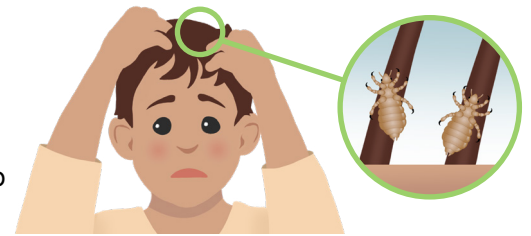


Signs and Symptoms

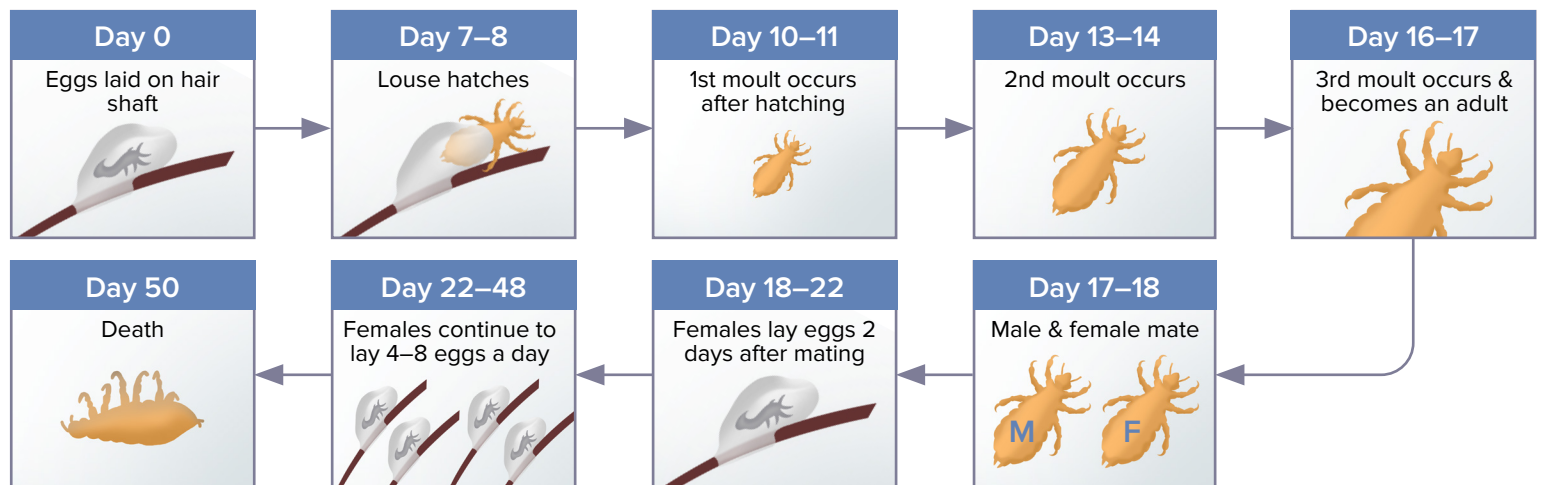
Head lice may remain asymptomatic. When symptoms are present, they are most likely to appear 2–4 weeks after initial infestation.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Itchy scalp, neck, ears
- Visible lice on scalp
- Eggs (nits) on hair shafts
- May have red bumps on scalp



Life Cycle of Lice



Treatment

Treatment often involves a combination of pharmacologic and mechanical removal methods.

Pharmacologic treatment:

A wide variety of over-the-counter products kill lice by causing respiratory paralysis. These products do not affect nits and should be repeated in 7–10 days to kill newly hatched lice.

Mechanical removal:

shaving of affected area or use of a nit comb

Preventing Reinfestation

Evaluate and treat all affected family members at the same time.

Teach clients how to eliminate lice from the household environment:

- Launder all clothing, bedding, and soft toys used in the two days prior to treatment.
- Items that cannot be washed may be dry cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks.
- Vacuum furniture and floors to remove fallen hairs that may contain nits.
- Avoid sharing hats, towels, and personal care items.

NOTES

