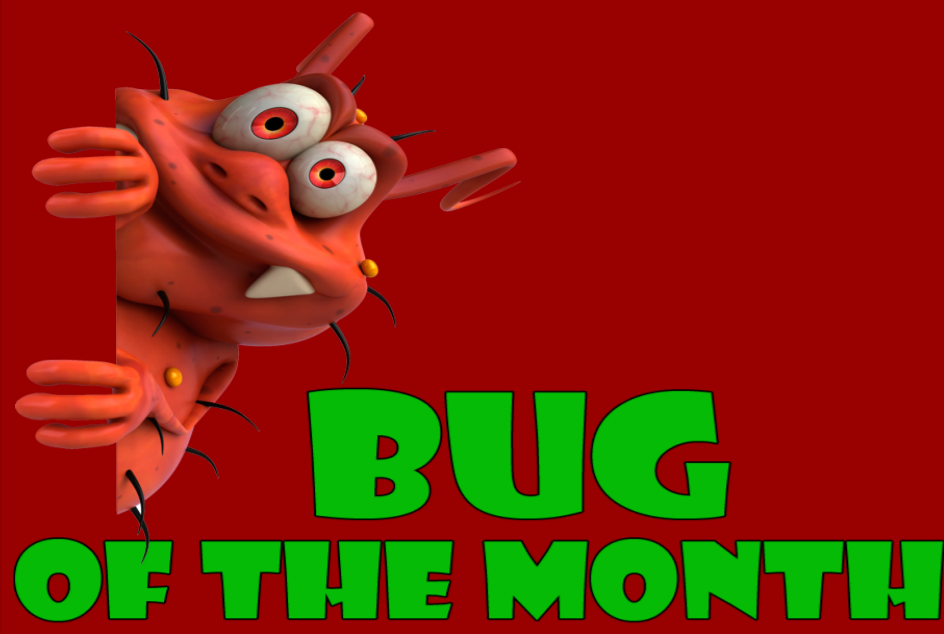


For Staff /Patient Education



PEDICULOSIS / HEAD LICE (*Pediculus humanus capitis*)

November 2016

What is it?

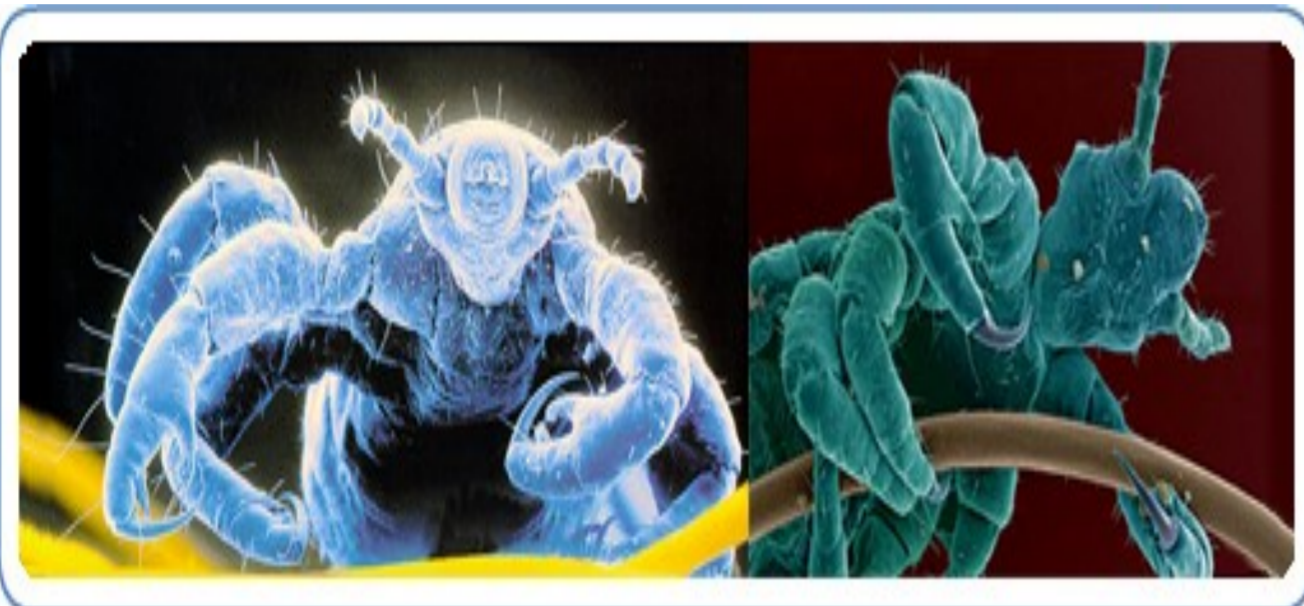


Image: Two lice viewed under an electron microscope. Note the claws used to grasp onto individual hairs. Credit: CDC

- The head louse, or *Pediculus humanus capitis*, is a parasitic insect that can be found on the head, eyebrows, and eyelashes of people. Head lice feed on human blood several times a day and live close to the human scalp.
- Head lice have three forms: the egg (also called a nit), the nymph, and the adult.
- Infestation with head lice is most common among pre-school children attending child care, elementary schoolchildren, and the household members of infested children.

- Head lice are not known to spread disease and should not be considered as a medical or public health hazard.
- Head lice can be an annoyance because their presence may cause itching and loss of sleep. Sometimes the itching can lead to excessive scratching that can sometimes increase the chance of a secondary skin infection.

How is it spread?

- Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly.
- Head lice are spread by direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Anyone who comes in head-to-head contact with someone who already has head lice is at greatest risk.
- Spread by contact with clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) or other personal items (such as combs, brushes, or towels) used by an infested person is uncommon. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Where is it found?

- Head lice are found worldwide .
- Humans are the only reservoir. The lice of other animals are not transmissible to humans.

Prevention and Control?

- 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. Disinfest combs and brushes used by an infested person by soaking them in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.
- 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°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. However, spending much time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to avoid reinfestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing.
- Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs; they are not necessary to control head lice and can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.
- To help control a head lice outbreak in a community, school, or camp, children can be taught to avoid activities that may spread head lice.

For more information contact:



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Source:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/dpdx/pediculosis/>



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