

Back at School

The school supplies are purchased, new clothes are still looking that way, the fall school routine has been established—and now you can relax a little. Or can you?

Experienced moms, dads and caregivers say no, as being back at school can bring a whole lot of problems after a summer of fun.

Most common among back-to-school problems are head lice (especially in the lower grades), catching some sort of bug (all grades), and your child feeling like he or she doesn't fit in (more common among middle schoolers).

Here are some pointers on how to help your child get through the return to school with minimum disruption.

Getting rid of head lice

Head lice: Just the thought of these tiny, crawling insects is enough to make you itch. Living on the human scalp and feeding on blood, head lice can be extremely irritating, but they do not spread disease and are not a health hazard.

Since they cannot hop, jump or fly, head lice rely on close contact to spread from one person to another. For this reason, outbreaks are most common in elementary and junior schools, where younger children are in close contact with one another during group projects. Lice are also spread through the sharing of personal articles such as hats and other head gear, hair ornaments, scarves and hair brushes. Girls are more likely to be affected than boys, due to their closer social behaviour.



Pediculus humanus capitis (human head louse)

Life cycle of the head louse

The female head louse lays four or five nits every day. Once laid, it takes seven to 10 days for a nit to hatch, and another seven to 10 days for the female to mature and begin laying her own eggs.

Head lice are clear in colour when hatched, then quickly develop a brownish tan colour after feeding. They live for approximately 30 days.

Head lice that have fallen off their human hosts quickly starve. (In most cases, a head louse will not survive for more than 24 hours away from its human host.)

Signs of infection

The most obvious sign of head lice is itching. If your child is frequently scratching her head, you should check for evidence of head lice.

Since lice are tiny, mobile, and hard to spot, it is easier to see their eggs—called “nits”—rather than the bugs themselves. Live nits can be difficult to identify because they are tan-coloured and blend in with the hair. Dead nits are silver-coloured and easier to see. These tiny specks are tightly attached to individual strands of hair, very close to the scalp.

Since nits are so small (about one-third the size of a sesame seed), you may need to search for them with a magnifying glass, or—better still—use the new Nitview® UV light device that makes nits glow for easy detection and extraction.

Lice lay nits on hair shafts close to the scalp, where the temperature keeps them warm until they hatch. Nits are most often found on the hair behind the ears and at the back of the neck. Since they are light in colour, it is easier to spot them on dark hair than on lighter hair.

If you find nits in your child's hair, then head lice are also present, and should be dealt with as soon as possible.

Treating head lice

- Check the hair of all family members. Shared activities in close proximity to others make it easy for head lice to spread. Treat everyone at the same time. (You might also inform the parents of your child's closest friends that he/she has lice and that you are taking measures to deal with them.)

NYDA® contains no harsh insecticides and works by blocking the breathing system of lice and their eggs, leading to suffocation.

The pleasant-smelling solution is sprayed onto dry hair, massaged in, and left for 30 minutes or so. After this, the dead lice and nits can be easily combed out using the enclosed comb. Let NYDA® remain on the hair for eight hours and follow with the shampoo of your choice.





Rise of the super louse

Head lice love human heads so much that they are now resisting the pyrethrum-type insecticides traditionally used to treat them. Through genetic mutation, a new strain of head louse dubbed the "super louse" appears to be spreading through school populations.

Pyrethrum insecticides (a term covering both the natural chrysanthemum derivative, *pyrethrin*, and its synthetic counterparts, the *pyrethroids*) are neurotoxins that paralyze lice, so that they cannot move. Permethrin is a commonly-used pyrethroid. Due to increasing resistance to pyrethrums, many of the older treatments fail to kill lice and their nits.

Newer treatments such as *NYDA*® and the *Nitview*® LED lice detection and extraction device are now available in our pharmacies, making the treatment of head lice both effective and sustained.

- Take appropriate measures to detect and treat the lice and their nits.
- Develop a no-sharing policy for hairbrushes, headgear, etc. until lice are eradicated.
- While it is not necessary to clean the entire house, it is wise to wash pillowcases, scarves etc. used by family members who have head lice, using the hottest water and dryer settings. Alternatively, store the items in an airtight plastic bag for two weeks.
- Check your child's hair regularly for possible reinfestation.

Introducing

Nitview®

"Prevention, early detection and immediate action are your best bets to fight lice," says **London Drugs** pharmacist, Jason Chan-Remillard.

The *Nitview*® Ledcomb is an internationally patented medical device that incorporates an ultraviolet light (400 - 405nm, light range naturally visible to the human eye) and a detachable comb with micro-channelled teeth for the effective removal of both lice and nits.

The lice and their eggs glow under the UV light making them very easy to find among the hairs. They can then be removed with the comb attachment.

The device can also be used to check clothing, towels and bed linen.

Nitview® can be used year after year to check for head lice, is safe for use on both wet and dry hair, and will not cause allergy or irritation.

UV
Light

