

Smart Facts About Lice

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A Day In The Life Of A Louse

Itching: Symptoms and Causes

Lice are too small to be felt, even while they are biting us. It can take weeks before an infestation becomes detectable.

Symptoms come in 2 forms: Nits and Itching.

Imagine a dozen lice, each eating every five hours. Every time they bite into our scalp a small amount of anticoagulant is left in the skin. This builds up until eventually the irritated skin starts to itch.

After feeding they defecate around the area in which they just fed. This body waste is full of bacteria which causes the skin infections. If a louse has been on another head, it's possible to carry disease germs from them.

While lice usually lay eggs around the nape of the neck and the ears (where it is warmest) they climb all over the head, eating and defecating everywhere.

Feeding

Within 7 - 10 days after an egg is laid, the new little nymph is hatched. Shortly after hatching, it has its first blood meal. After that it feeds every 4 or 5 hours.

To get blood, it must puncture the skin, inject an anticoagulant saliva, and draw out the blood. This causes an allergic reaction which leads to itching

The Simple Lives of Head Lice

Born (7-10 day incubation)

Eat (Every 5 hours)

Defecate (A Lot)

Mate (Everyday)

Lay eggs (3 - 10 a day)

Die (After 30 days. Males die after 15)

Nits

- The average louse lays up to 100 eggs in its 30 day adult life. Roughly 80% of these survive. Lice start laying eggs after they're about 5 - 7 days old.
- Each egg is coated with a glue which is so strong that, if the mother does not move away quickly enough, she will be glued to the hair along with the nit and die.
- Glue keeps the nit in place near the scalp where it is kept warm by body heat. Unless the nit is very close to the scalp, it won't have enough heat to incubate.
- In warm climates, the mother lays eggs all over the head. In colder climates she frequently lays eggs where it is warmest - the nape of the neck and behind the ears.

How Do Lice Spread From Person To Person ? They Hitchhike !

Lice cannot fly or jump. They have claws for grasping hair. They spread almost exclusively through head to head contact. Tight hair styles reduce exposure. They don't normally live more than 2 days without feeding.

They can't digest anything but human blood.