

## DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Managing Head Lice

Head lice is common in children but can affect adults too. While not a dangerous condition, it can be uncomfortable and sometimes tricky to manage. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate this condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

## Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

<b>Louse (Lice)</b>	A parasitic insect that feeds on blood. There are three types of lice—head lice, body lice, and pubic lice—and they are completely different from one another. Head lice, in particular, live on your scalp and in the hair on your head. They move around by crawling and cannot hop or jump from one person to another.
<b>Insecticide</b>	Chemicals that harm, kill, or repel parasites and other insects. In the case of head lice, insecticides may be applied to the scalp or taken by mouth. Unfortunately, there is increasing resistance to over-the-counter treatments. If one of these treatments is not successful, you may need to turn to your doctor for a prescription medication.
<b>Nit</b>	Louse eggs and nits are not the same thing. When a female louse lays eggs, she secretes a glue-like substance that allows them to stick to the hair shaft. The eggs are placed near the scalp where the body temperature is warmest. They will hatch in seven to 10 days, leaving behind an empty shell. This is what is known as the nit. As your hair grows, these nits are pulled further away from the scalp. A nit that is more than 0.6 centimeters (0.25 inches) away from the scalp is unlikely to be viable and is most likely dead.
<b>Nit (Lice) Comb</b>	Nits can be small and difficult to see, especially if someone has lighter colored hair. A nit comb is a fine-toothed comb, preferably metal, that can help to find and remove nits and lice from the hair. A nit comb is best used on wet hair so that the glue that sticks the nit to the hair can be loosened and more easily removed.
<b>Pediculosis</b>	The medical term for infestation with head lice.

