

Pest Profile



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Common Name: Head Louse

Scientific Name: *Pediculus humanus capitus*

Order and Family: Anoplura: Pediculidae

Size and Appearance: Adults are roughly 2.4-3.7 mm in length with flattened gray colored bodies. The body is elongate, with the head only appearing slightly more narrow than the thorax. Three pairs of legs with 1 large claw for grasping hairs.

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg	< 0.08 mm in length by 0.3 mm in width	Pearly white in color, broad, with unique “cap” that allows for respiration and enhanced ability to emerge. Cemented to hair near scalp by female in clusters of 50-100.
Larva/Nymph	< 1 mm- 4.2 mm depending on instar	3 instar stages that last about 3 weeks. Resemble adults.
Adult	2.4-3.7 mm	Flattened, elongate bodies with head appearing slightly more narrow than the thorax. Three pairs of legs designed for clasping hairs.
Pupa (if applicable)		

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Piercing/sucking

Host /stored food products: *Pediculous humanus capitus* DeGeer lives exclusively on the body of humans and performs entire lifecycle there.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): Head lice do not vector any known diseases but do easily spread through sharing coats and hats. An infestation can cause severe itching and social embarrassment for the host. The eggs, or “nits,” are the most visible stage of head lice and are often found on the back of scalp or behind the ears. When lice are dislodged, they often do not survive very long without host presence. Usually, a medicated shampoo or using a “nit comb” solves the issue.

References:

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