What is Head Lice?
It is caused by a very small insect (louse) which lives on human heads. The tan-colored insects lay eggs (nits) close to the scalp. The eggs are gray or white and very small (eye of needle size).

Incubation Period: (Time from exposure to infection to beginning of symptoms of illness).
Head lice live for about 30 days on a person. Eggs of lice usually hatch in 6-10 days. After another 10 days the hatched nits become adult head lice.

Period of Communicability: (Period person can give infection to another).
As long as the lice or eggs/nits are present.

What are the Symptoms of Head Lice Infestation?
Severe itching and scratches on the scalp and neck. (This could lead to a secondary bacterial infection.) When looking for head lice:

1. Check hair for crawling lice (usually only a few).
2. Look for eggs (nits) glued/attached to the hair often behind the ears and at the hairline at the back of the neck, are very difficult to remove and are close to scalp.
3. Scratch marks on scalp or back of neck.

How Is Head Lice Spread?
Head lice are spread from one person to another by direct contact with an infested person’s head or by contact with lice-infested items, such as hats, hairbrushes, combs, towels, and bedding.

How Is Head Lice Treated?
- Contact your physician, pharmacist, or school nurse for assistance in obtaining a shampoo that is specific for head lice. Follow the instructions carefully. After shampooing with a pediculicide (lice killing) shampoo, you must be sure to remove all the nits with either a fine-toothed comb or with your fingers. If any nits remain, they can hatch and your child can be reinfested, since the lice killing shampoo may not kill the nits.

How Can the Spread of Head Lice Be Prevented/Limited in Child Care Center?
- Follow cleaning recommendations found in IDPH Healthbeat.
- Avoid sharing brushes, combs, hats, headgear (headphones/helmets), towels, bedding, pillows, etc. Coat hooks should be at least 12” apart. Avoid piling coats/jackets on top of each other. Instruct children to put hats or scarves in coat sleeves. Follow cleaning
If a child/children in a child care center is/are diagnosed with head lice, all children in that classroom group should be screened for head lice or nits. Also, check sibling of the infected child/children in other classes or groups for head lice or nits. Exclude any child/children infected until day after treatment.

* Other Comments/Suggestions

- Inform staff and parents of other enrolled children who may have been exposed of the infestation. Educate parents, staff and children about the disease, how it is spread and preventive measures.

- Parents should check treated child/children’s head daily for 2-3 weeks

* Exclusion

Exclude child from school at the end of day that the lice are discovered until the morning after the first shampoo, lotion or cream rinse pediculicide is properly applied.