Life Cycle of the Head Louse

1. Egg
2. 1st nymph
3. 2nd nymph
4. 3rd nymph
5. Adult female and male lice

The first instar nymph hatches after six to nine days of development. Within minutes it takes its first blood meal.

The female head louse lays individual eggs (called nits), strongly gluing them to head hair shafts near the skin. The adult lives for about 30 days, feeding on blood several times each day.

After seven days of feeding and two more growth stages, the first instar nymph becomes an adult louse.

The entire head louse life cycle takes place on the host. Only humans serve as hosts and direct physical contact is necessary for lice to be transferred from one person to another.