

Prevention

Useful activities and ideas to help prevent infestation:

- **check your child's hair regularly** for head lice and eggs ('nits') – use a metal fine tooth 'nit' comb and plenty of hair conditioner applied to the **dry** hair, to make the task easier and more effective. To help children sit still for this, offer distracting activities, e.g. play a favourite DVD, provide games, encourage reading, offer a head massage.
- **tie long hair back** – braid and/or put it up if possible.
- **consider applying hair gel or mousse**
 - these do not prevent or repel lice but may help to keep stray hair strands from contact with other heads.
- **avoid sharing combs or brushes.**



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PARENTS' INFORMATION

TREATING HEADLICE



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What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny insect parasites that live on the human head, feeding on the scalp several times a day. Head lice reproduce by laying their eggs (nits) on the hair shaft close to the scalp. They are not dangerous, don't carry diseases and are not a sign of poor hygiene.

How are head lice spread?

Head lice are spread by head-to-head contact with another person who has headlice, e.g. when doing group work at school playing, or hugging. Head lice can run from one head to another in seconds. Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim, but they can sometimes 'trapeze' from one hair to another.



How to Treat Head lice

Wet combing

The wet combing method involves removing the head lice by combing the hair using a special fine-toothed comb.

You can buy a fine-toothed comb from your local chemist or you can order one online.

Lotions or sprays don't need to be used for wet combing. However, to be effective, wet combing needs to be carried out regularly and thoroughly. The method you should use is described below.

- Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo and apply plenty of conditioner, before using a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
- Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb. Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots, with the bevel-edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp.
- Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair with every stroke, and check the comb for lice.
- Remove lice by wiping or rinsing the comb.
- Work methodically through the hair, section by section, so that the whole head is combed through.
- Rinse out conditioner and repeat the combing procedure.
- Repeat the procedure on days **3, 6, 9, 12** and **15**, so that you clear young lice as they hatch, before they have time to reach maturity.
- Children should not miss school because of Head Lice.



Lotion or sprays

Using a lotion or spray is an alternative method of treating head lice. However, to be effective they need to be used correctly. Your pharmacist will be able to recommend an over-the-counter lotion or spray and advise you about how to use it correctly.

A lotion or spray should only be used if a living (moving) head louse is found. Crème rinses and shampoos aren't thought to be effective and therefore aren't recommended.

Ensure you have enough lotion or spray to treat everyone in your family who's affected. Use enough to coat the scalp and the length of the hair during each application.

Follow the instructions that come with the lotion or spray when applying it. Depending on the product you're using, the length of time it will need to be left on the head may vary from 10 minutes to eight hours.

The normal advice is to treat the hair and repeat the treatment after seven days. Some products also supply a comb for removing dead lice and eggs.

Some products may be capable of killing eggs as well as lice, although there's no certainty of this. Check for baby lice hatching from eggs three to five days after using a product and again 10-12 days afterwards.

At least two applications of lotion are needed to kill lice over the hatching period because the lotions don't always kill louse eggs.

If the lice appear unaffected by the product, or if the problem persists, seek advice from your school nurse, health visitor, pharmacist or GP.