



#headlice  
# publichealth5-19service



# HEAD LICE FACTSHEET

Head lice can be a frustrating condition to treat. This factsheet will provide you with very helpful tips as well as links to lots of websites to help you deal effectively with your child's head lice problem.

## TOP TIPS ABOUT HEAD LICE:

Head lice are tiny insects that live in hair and are a common problem in school aged children. Head lice are sometimes referred to as 'Nits', these are actually the head lice eggs that are attached to the hair. If left untreated the condition can become very itchy and uncomfortable. They are spread by direct head to head contact, as they climb (they don't jump) from one person's hair to another. They are not choosy about hair types, therefore they can be found in long or short hair and in hair that is clean or dirty. They can only live for a maximum of 24 hours when detached from hair, as they need the blood from the scalp to survive.

**Tip 1:** Spotting head lice can be difficult, the best way to detect them is to use a special fine-toothed comb called a detection comb, they can be bought in any chemist, supermarket or online. Weekly detection combing is recommended as a preventative method.

**Tip 2:** There are 2 suggested combing methods, either dry and wet combing:-

**Dry Combing** – involves using an ordinary brush or comb to ensure there are no tangles in the hair, then using a detection comb, starting at the roots and drawing the comb to the ends of the hair and checking for any lice on the comb. If a louse is seen on the comb, with your thumb trap it against the comb and wipe on a tissue or a piece of kitchen roll. Comb each section 3-4 times before moving onto the next section of hair. Repeat until the whole head has been combed in this way.

**Wet Combing-** involves washing the hair with your usual shampoo and lots of conditioner, then combing hair with an ordinary brush or comb to ensure there are no tangles in the hair. Use a detection comb, starting at the roots and drawing the comb to the ends of the hair, checking for any lice on the comb. If a louse is seen on the comb, trap it with your thumb against the comb and wipe on a tissue or a piece of kitchen roll. Repeat with each section of hair until the whole head has been combed in this way. Do this at least twice to ensure that no areas of the head have been missed. Continue until no more lice are detected. A finer toothed comb maybe required to remove the nits (eggs).

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Due to the lifecycle of head lice if using the Wet Combing method to treat head lice then repeat this procedure on days 5, 9, 13 and again on day 17 to check for any live head lice.

**The rest of the family in the household need to be checked for head lice using either of these methods if head lice are found.**

**Tip 3:** Treatment of head lice can either be the Wet Combing method described above or using lotions and sprays. There are various products available which require application to the hair and scalp in order to kill the head lice. These are available from chemists and supermarkets. Some of the treatments may need to be repeated after 7 days due to the lifecycle of head lice, to ensure that any newly hatched lice are killed.

**Tip 4:** The following treatments aren't recommended because they're unlikely to be effective: products containing permethrin, head lice "repellents", electric head lice combs, tree and plant oil treatments, such as tea tree oil, eucalyptus oil, and lavender oil, herbal remedies.

**Tip 5:** There is no need to stay off school or wash clothing and laundry on a hot wash, as this is unlikely to be useful.

## VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Information on head lice.

[www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/how-do-i-check-for-headlice-and-treat-headlice.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/how-do-i-check-for-headlice-and-treat-headlice.aspx)

An NHS film clip on how to check for head lice

[www.cumbriapartnership.nhs.uk/our-services/children-families](http://www.cumbriapartnership.nhs.uk/our-services/children-families)