



Guidelines On the Treatment of Head Lice

Although the Scottish Government has directed that schools no longer issue letters home when instances of headlice are reported, we believe it would be helpful to send out information to all families on a regular basis.

Head lice are tiny insects that live in human hair. They're particularly common in children. Head lice are whitish to grey-brown in colour, and smaller than the size of a pinhead when first hatched. When fully grown they're about the size of a sesame seed. They can't fly, jump or swim and are spread by head-to-head contact, climbing from the hair of an infected person to the hair of someone else. A head lice infestation isn't the result of dirty hair or poor hygiene. All types of hair can be affected, regardless of its length and condition. Head lice only affect humans and can't be passed on to animals or be caught from them.

It's difficult to prevent a head lice infestation because head lice are spread by head-to-head contact. Regular [detection combing](#) – for example, on a weekly basis – is the best way to find new lice quickly.

The most recent guidance for treating head lice can be found on the following website:

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

In summary the guidance is as follows:

After a head lice infestation has been confirmed you can treat the lice at home by wet combing the hair with a head lice comb or by using a lotion or spray that's designed to kill head lice (see below).

Most infestation occurs in the home or close community contacts. You need:

1. A detection comb (from the community pharmacist or supermarket, etc)
2. An ordinary comb
3. Good lighting

- Detection combing is recommended at least once per week as routine and as soon as possible after any close contact has been found with headlice infestation.
- Wash hair well, (conditioner may be applied to make combing easier) then dry it with a towel. The hair should be damp, not dripping.
- Make sure there is good light. Daylight is best.
- Comb with a detection comb. Start with the teeth of the detection comb touching the skin of the scalp at the top of the head. Draw the comb carefully towards the edge of the hair. Look carefully at the teeth of the comb in a good light to see if any lice are present.
- Repeat this from the top of the head to the edge of the hair in all directions working round the head. It can take 15 minutes or so to do it properly for each head.
- If there are head lice, you will find one or more lice on the teeth of the comb.
- If you find what you think is a moving louse, stick it to a piece of paper and cover with clear adhesive tape. If necessary, show this to the nurse, pharmacist or GP for confirmation and advice regarding treatment.
- Clean comb under the tap. A nailbrush may help.

Additional Notes

- Check damp hair by combing at least once a week.
- Detection combs can be purchased from the community pharmacist. Some treatment preparations contain a detection comb.
- If you need help or advice regarding the detection procedure, ask you local pharmacist, school/practice nurse, community nurse, health visitor or GP.
- Do **not use** treatment preparations unless you are sure that you have found a **living, moving louse**.