

Dealing with head lice can often be a fact of life for many parents today, yet it is reassuring to know that with modern treatments and your own early detective work, they are easily treatable. This parent's information leaflet is designed to help you cope with the problem of head lice.

The facts about head lice

- Head lice cannot fly, hop or jump, they can only be spread by prolonged head to head contact
- Head lice live on any kind of hair – clean or dirty, long or short
- You are unlikely to catch head lice from objects such as chair backs
- A lot of head lice infections are caught from close family and friends in the home – not just in school
- Anyone can catch head lice – but they are more common in children

How can I detect head lice in my family?

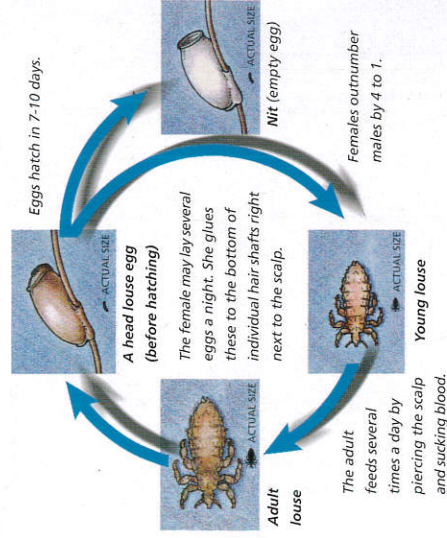
Not everyone with head lice will have an itchy scalp. Because of this it is important to regularly check the hair. The only recommended way of checking for head lice is detection combing, using a special fine-toothed detection comb (available at your pharmacy).

- Wash the hair well and towel dry
- Comb the hair using an ordinary comb to remove tangles
- Start with the teeth of the detection comb touching the scalp at the top of the head and comb slowly towards the end of the hair
- Look carefully at the teeth of the comb for any head lice. They are greyish-brown in colour and roughly the size of a sesame seed
- You will need to do this over the whole of the head. It will take about 15 minutes
- Keep checking the comb, wiping it on a tissue after each stroke

How can I get rid of head lice?

- Treatment should only be given if a living, moving louse is seen on the tissue, comb or head
- Head louse preparations containing an insecticide are the only treatments clinically proven to be effective against head lice. Your pharmacist or doctor will be able to recommend a suitable and effective treatment for you
- When applying the product the manufacturer's instructions should be followed carefully to avoid the possibility of treatment failure

Many experts recommend checking the hair within 7 days of treatment. This is because some eggs may survive the first application. Apply a second treatment on day 7 if live lice are found.



Alternative treatments are available. Your pharmacist, doctor, health visitor or school nurse will be able to provide you with details.



Don't use head louse treatment as a deterrent. This does not work. Treatments must only be used if live lice have been found.