

Head Lice-Things You Need To Know.

Head lice are tiny insects that live in human hair.

They are particularly common in children but can affect people of all ages.

They are spread by head to head contact. They can't fly jump or swim.

A head lice infestation isn't the result of dirty hair or poor hygiene. All types of hair can be affected, regardless of length or condition.

Head lice often causes a person's scalp to itch. This is caused by an allergy to the lice. Not everyone is allergic to head lice. In some cases a rash may appear on the back of the neck. This is caused by a reaction to lice droppings.

LIFE CYCLE OF HEAD LICE.

A female head louse lays eggs by cementing them to hairs where they are kept warm by the scalp. The eggs are pin-head size.



After 7 to 10 days the baby lice hatch and the empty egg shells remain glued in place. These remains are known as nits. Nits are white in colour.

Head lice take 9-10 days to become fully grown.

A female head louse may start to lay eggs from 9 days after she has hatched. Therefore to break the cycle and stop them spreading they need to be removed within 9 days of hatching.

To confirm an active head lice infestation a louse must be found through a reliable, accurate method, such as detection combing.

DETECTION COMBING involves using a special fine-toothed head lice comb with a tooth spacing of 0.2-0.3mm to comb through the hair.

The comb works best on wet hair but can also be used on

dry hair. Lice remain motionless when wet.

WET DETECTION.-

Wash hair using ordinary shampoo and apply plenty of conditioner. Use a wide toothed comb to detangle the hair.

Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging switch to the louse detection comb.

Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair from the scalp and check the comb for lice.

Remove lice by wiping or rinsing the comb after every stroke.

Work through the whole head of hair, section by section.

Rinse out the conditioner and repeat the combing procedure in the wet hair.

DRY DETECTION.-

For dry detection combing look for lice as the comb is drawn through the hair. If you see the louse trap it against the face of the comb with your thumb.

If you are unsure if you have found a louse, attach it to sticky tape and take it to your pharmacist, GP, school

nurse or practice nurse for confirmation.

HOW TO TREAT-

Wet combing is the same method as the wet detection but this procedure should be repeated on days 3,6,9,12 and 15 so that you clear young lice as they hatch, before they have time to reach maturity.

Lotion or spray should be used only if a living (moving) louse is found.

Follow the instructions that come with the lotion or spray when applying it. The normal advice is to treat the hair and repeat after 7 days.

Check for baby lice hatching from eggs 3-5 days after using the product and again 10-12 days afterwards.

PREVENTION-

It is difficult to prevent a head lice infestation because head lice are spread through head to head contact.

Regular detection combing on a weekly basis is the best way to find new head lice quickly.