

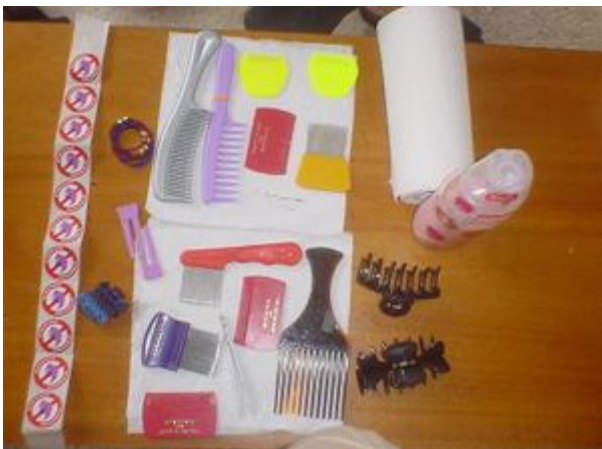
Head Lice Treatment

Head lice are only found on the human head. They are not found on any other part of the human body, although there are other types of lice that do infest other parts of the human body. Nor are they found on any other animal. Head lice do not live on furniture, hats, bedding, carpet or anywhere else in the environment. Treating anything other than the human head does not eradicate head lice.

Before you choose a treatment for head lice, consider the following:

- Make sure that the heads you treat actually do have head lice and do not treat unless they do!
- Do not treat babies or a scalp that is irritated or inflamed.
- Do not let product into eyes.
- There is no preventative treatment available. While it is tempting to "do" the whole family, unless they actually have head lice you may be contributing to the problem of resistance.
- Any product applied to the head should be used with caution, particularly on young heads. **READ THE LABEL.**
- Use your common sense when selecting a head lice treatment. There is nothing natural about pouring a product on a head!
- Some essential oils, including tea tree oil, can trigger a reaction in some people. Tea tree oil is a proven antiseptic, however, its efficacy as a head lice treatment has not been demonstrated.
- Many products have a very strong smell. A strong smelling substance left on the hair for any length of time may trigger a reaction.
- Certainly try a commercial head lice preparation, but read the label first and apply strictly as directed. Again, in desperation it can be tempting to change the dose in an effort to kill the lice. However, increasing the dosage does not enhance the effectiveness of treatment products.
- Apply product to every strand of hair and work through, leave for 20 minutes, and comb out with a good quality lice comb.
- If dead lice are found, the product has worked. But you must re-treat in seven days to catch nymphs that have emerged from unhatched eggs.
- If you find live lice, the treatment probably hasn't worked. Either use another product with a different active ingredient (read the label) OR try the comb and conditioner method.
- Reduce transmission by tying hair back and braiding. We now it's hard for young girls to consider this cool, but try it!
- Regularly check your children's hair. Young girls growing up often become very independent about their hair care and it can become difficult to convince them that it's important for you to continue checking their hair. Try to persist or show them how they can check their own hair when they wash it in the shower or bath.
- Keep a good quality head lice comb in the shower so that every time anyone washes their hair they use the comb.
- **Do not use insecticides, methyated spirits or kerosene on your child's head.**

What's the comb and conditioner method?



Head lice breathe through small openings along their abdomens called spiracles. By coating the hair and therefore the louse in something thick and slimy, these openings close over, shutting down the louse's breathing for about 20 minutes.

Head lice can move very fast across the scalp. Using a head lice comb on a dry scalp will often miss many lice as they are very clever at avoiding being caught. While unfortunately the louse doesn't die with this method, it does slow it down so that you can catch them.

Any thick and slimy substance applied to the hair will have the same effect. Some parents swear by mayonnaise or

olive oil, though it does seem logical to use simple hair conditioner. It can be difficult to wash out oils easily and using mayonnaise does seem a waste! Nevertheless the principle is the same; the lice will be slowed down so that you can comb them out.

Applying conditioner, or any other slimy product, will not kill nor remove eggs, although some good quality lice combs will remove them.

Nitbusting at home

Nitbusting can be a time-consuming task. If Nitbusting at home with your child, do the following:

- ✓ Try sitting the child between your legs on a low stool and putting on a video for an hour while you work.
- ✓ Wrap a towel or kitchen paper around the child's shoulders to catch conditioner spill.
- ✓ Remove any scrunchies, ribbons clasps, etc. from the child's head and comb out plaits and braids.
- ✓ Apply liberal amounts of conditioner to the scalp and massage it through all the hair shafts. You will use a lot of conditioner. Every hair has to be coated to ensure it reaches the lice.
- ✓ Lice live close to the scalp, so make sure that you cover the hair shaft close to the scalp. You don't have to work the conditioner onto the whole length of the hair. Combing will spread it well enough. The idea of the application is to restrict the movement of the head lice long enough for you to catch them with a comb.
- ✓ After you've applied the conditioner, use a large comb to part small sections of the hair starting from the nape and working upwards toward the crown. Eggs are often found behind the ears and toward the back of the head. By using this method, you are more likely to find the head lice on top of and toward the front of the head.
- ✓ When the hair is detangled and manageable, use a fine lice comb to comb out each section several times.
- ✓ After each comb out, wipe the conditioner on the paper towel. If the child has head lice, you will see them on the towel.
- ✓ Keep combing each section of hair until no further lice, nymphs or eggs appear on the paper towel. Often you will see lots of old egg casings that may take awhile to remove.
- ✓ Once you have combed and re-combed each section of hair, either re-plait or tie it back. If it is very short, suggest to the child some interesting styling! Young boys often like their hair spiked up or Mohawk-like!



Treating long hair

Depending on the hair length and type, it is often easier to neatly section long and thick hair before applying conditioner to avoid getting the hair into a terrible tangle.

Part long hair once from forehead to scalp, and use hair clips to keep the part in place.

Apply conditioner along the part line and massage in with the comb. This is to stop lice from crossing from one side of the head to the other.

Part the hair in a straight line from ear around scalp to centre part and clip or pin top section to crown of scalp.

Apply conditioner again to the part and massage in.



Apply more conditioner to loose hair down to nape of neck.

Use the head lice comb to comb out the conditioner. Start at the base of the hair shaft and comb down the length of the hair in one stroke.

Wipe the comb on a paper towel and check for lice. Lice are easily identified on the paper towel. Continue combing this section until you are certain you have covered the area several times.

Repeat the sectioning on the other side of the part towards the other ear.

After you've done these two sections, continue parting horizontally from the centre part sections of hair and apply conditioner and comb out as before.



Other things you should know

Head lice often congregate on the crown of the head, so that it is not until you reach these last sections of hair that you find adult lice. However, heads that are severely infected will have adult lice everywhere.

A good head lice comb should also remove nymphs, the stage between egg and adult louse—teenagers really. These can be difficult to identify with the naked eye, but appear as small insects on the paper towel.

