

HEAD LICE

Head lice are a normal part of childhood – surveys among primary school children have found that nearly 1 in 10 have head lice at any one time. As a parent you probably know what a hassle it is to treat head lice and just how frustrating it can be when your child comes home scratching their head yet again.

In order to help minimise the occurrences of head lice within the school, we would like to remind parents and carers how to detect and treat these creatures. Please read the following information and take action as required.

Head lice are small insects, up to 3mm long and can be difficult to spot.

Head lice eggs (nits) are yellow, brown or white (empty shells) and attached to the hair.

Head lice sometimes can make your child's head feel:

- itchy
- like something is moving in their hair

The only way to be sure someone has head lice is by finding live lice or eggs. You can do this by combing their hair with a special fine-toothed comb (detection comb). You can buy these online or at pharmacies.

How to get rid of head lice

You can treat head lice without seeing your GP.

Treat head lice as soon as you spot them. You should check everyone in the house, and treat them on the same day if they have head lice.

There's no need to keep your child off school with head lice.

Use lotion or spray to treat head lice

You can use medicated lotions and sprays that kill head lice in all types of hair, including afro hair. You can buy these from pharmacies, supermarkets or online.

Head lice should die within a day. Lotions and sprays come with a comb to remove dead lice and eggs.

Some treatments need to be repeated after a week to kill any newly-hatched lice. Check the pack to see whether they're okay for you or your child to use and how long they should be left in the hair.

If lotions or sprays don't work, speak to your pharmacist about other treatments.

Some treatments aren't recommended because they're unlikely to work:

- 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

If you don't want to use chemicals

You can buy a special fine-toothed comb (detection comb) online or from pharmacies to remove head lice and nits.

Follow the instructions on the pack, but generally you:

- use the comb on wet or dry hair, although it usually works best on wet hair with conditioner
- comb the whole head of hair, from the roots to the end of the hair
- repeat every few days for 2 weeks

Don't use medicated lotions and sprays to prevent head lice. This can irritate the scalp.

There's no need for children to stay off school, or to wash laundry on a hot wash.

Further information and guidance can be found at: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-lice>