

## After care

- After using the nit comb, check every week for one month to ensure the lice have gone.
- Make sure that everyone who has been in contact with someone with head lice is checked for lice, especially family members and close school friends.
- All affected members of the household should be treated at the same time.
- Combs and brushes should be washed in hot water daily.
- Children of primary school age should be checked regularly to detect head lice early and prevent spread.

## Reduce the risk

Head lice are not a serious condition, but it is best to tackle them early to prevent them passing to others.

- ✘ **Do not use medicated lotions to prevent head lice as they might become resistant.**
- ✔ **Evidence has shown that wet combing is the best method to treat head lice infestation.**

## Treatment methods

As a result of the NHS self-care campaign, head lice treatments are no longer prescribed on the NHS and will have to be purchased.

Speak to your pharmacist for more information.



**Nit combs**  
Best method to treat head lice



**Physical insecticide**  
e.g. dimeticone 4% gel – resistance is unlikely to develop



**Chemical insecticides**  
e.g. malathion 0.5% aqueous liquid – resistance has been reported

## HEAD LICE

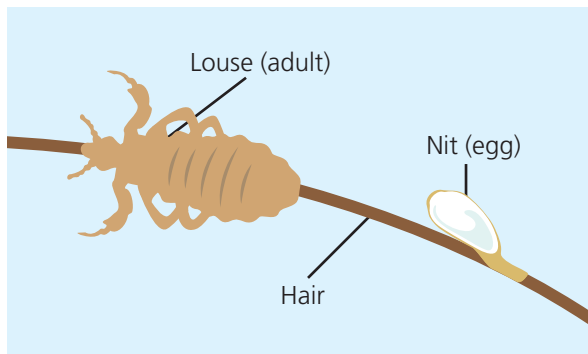


General information for schools, school nurses, GPs, parents and health visitors

## What are head lice?

Head lice are wingless insects that live on the hairs of people's heads. They are very common in children.

Lice can only live on human heads and can't fly or jump. They move by head-to-head contact and use their legs to hold tightly onto the hair.



Head lice are generally 2–3 millimetres, about the size of a sesame seed or a small grain of rice. They lay their eggs at the root of the hair, next to the skin. These eggs are known as nits and hatch after about seven days. The lice are fully grown after 14 days and will then increase in number.

Symptoms can include an itchy scalp and sensation of movement in the hair.

**However**, note that lice do not always cause itching so you can be unaware that you have them.

## Detecting head lice

Your head might feel itchy, and you might feel as if something is moving in your hair, but not everyone will feel this, so it's important to check hair regularly. Although you might see the adult lice as they move round, it is more common to see nits (eggs) than adult lice in a child's hair. The nits are 1 millimetre in size and are white or yellow in colour and are most commonly found:

- on the scalp (the skin on your head)
- behind the ears
- at the back of the neck, just above your collar

If you can't see any lice right away, try combing wet hair with a fine tooth comb over a piece of white paper or the sink to see if any lice drop out.

## Nit combs

Wet combing is the best way to check if there is a head lice infestation and to remove lice and nits – both the empty egg shells and any live eggs.

You can use any ordinary shampoo or conditioner to wet the hair. This makes combing much easier and stops the adult head lice from moving round.

Combing dry hair will not work as lice are able to move around easily in dry hair.



## How to wet comb

Before you begin, use a regular brush/comb to remove any tangles.

1. Wet hair thoroughly. Apply hair conditioner to wet hair and comb through the roots to ends.
2. Part the hair into about 4 to 6 sections, depending on hair thickness and length. This may not be necessary on children with very short hair.
3. Comb through each section with the nit comb, clearing each section of lice and eggs before you move onto the next.
4. After every two or three combings, clear the comb of any lice or eggs.
5. Once finished, rinse conditioner from hair as normal.

