Like the common cold anyone can catch head lice. It is a community problem that affects adults and children.

WHAT ARE HEADLICE?

Headlice are flat greyish-brown insects, the size of a pinhead, which live in the hair. They like to stay close to the scalp for warmth and feed by biting the scalp and sucking blood.

WHAT ARE NITS?

Nits are empty white egg cases. They are not always a sign of actual head lice infection and grow out with the hair.

DETECTION AND PREVENTION

You only have head lice infection if you see live lice in the hair. Lice are most easily detected by fine tooth combing wet conditioned hair. If no lice can be found by careful combing of the hair from the roots then there is no need to consider applying head lice lotions.

WHEN TO COMB

Comb and check hair regularly - once a week. There may be no itching to warn you that headlice are present. It is very important for everyone to check regularly. **Remember - at least once a week.**

HOW TO COMB

Headlice may be detected by this method. If it is done properly headlice may be cleared over a two - six week period.

- Wash hair in normal way with an ordinary shampoo.

- Use a hair conditioner and while hair is wet comb through from roots.

OR

- Use a light oil e.g. olive oil or grape oil on dry hair and comb through from roots.

- Light oils or conditioner makes combing easier, they do not kill lice.

- Use a fine-tooth comb (strong plastic if possible). The teeth on the comb should be no greater than 0.2mm apart. Check when you purchase these combs from your local pharmacy.

- Systematically part hair and ensure teeth of comb slot into hair at the roots with every stroke.

- Comb hair over a pale sheet or paper, white towel or pillowcase.

- Clear the comb of lice between each stroke.

- If you find any lice, repeat this routine every 2 to 3 days for 2 to 6 weeks so that any lice emerging from the eggs are removed before they can spread or reproduce. This will only work if carried out exactly as described.

TREATMENT

If you find live lice you have three options.

1. COMBING METHOD - on hair washed and conditioned or on dry hair to which a light oil has been applied as described.

2. NATURAL TREATMENTS - these treatments include essential oils or rinses and form part of a combing treatment. Some natural oils can be dangerous if not used properly, use only under the guidance of a qualified aromatherapy practitioner, herbalist or pharmacist. Do not expect these treatments to eradicate the lice - combing is essential.

3. USE INSECTICIDAL LOTIONS and then WET COMB. Please read instructions very carefully about application of the lotions and note that a further application is recommended after 7 days. You can seek advice from your GP, Pharmacist, Health Visitor or School Nurse. You should ensure that the product you are using is a lotion NOT a shampoo.
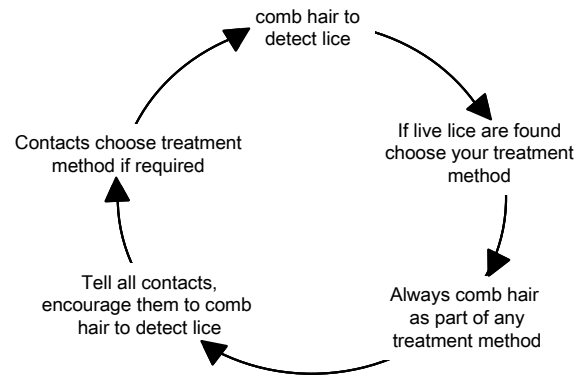
It is important to wet comb hair after the correct use of the lotion to remove dead lice and any lice which may hatch from eggs as lotions do not always kill the eggs. Continue to wet comb hair every 2 to 3 days for 7 to 10 days after the correct use of the lotion.

Do not over use the lotions - a maximum of 3 uses in 3 weeks is recommended. Then do not use again within a 6-week period. Continue to comb and this will reduce the need to use a lotion.

WHICHEVER TREATMENT IS USED

- Check the heads of all the family and close contacts and treat using one of the three options described.

- Tell all known contacts - e.g. grandparents, aunts, uncles, child minders so they can check their hair and if necessary treat.

- Always continue to comb hair on a regular basis to check for reinfection.

REMEMBER

comb hair to detect lice

If live lice are found choose your treatment method

Always comb hair as part of any treatment method

Tell all contacts, encourage them to comb hair to detect lice

Contacts choose treatment method if required

Prevention is better than cure. Check hair at least once a week if headlice are a problem in your area.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact: _____

_____

_____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

The Prevention and Treatment of Head Lice

HEAD LICE

CHECK THEM

TREAT THEM

BEAT THEM

patient
information
leaflet