

## The Problem Won't Go Away?

DID YOU ...

- ... use enough lotion or liquid?
  - ... apply it correctly?
  - ... let it dry naturally?
  - ... leave it on for 12 hours?
- ... use a second bottle 7 days after the first?
- ... check all your close family and friends?
  - ... check adults as well as children
- ... treat all infected contacts at the same time?

### REMEMBER

**It doesn't matter how many  
nits you have,  
or how itchy your scalp is –  
if you can't find  
a living, moving louse,  
you don't have lice.**

This document is based on a leaflet originally produced by the North West (Liverpool) Drug Information Centre, 70 Pembroke Place, Liverpool L69 3GF

# HEAD LICE

*These notes are intended for families  
Please photocopy and give to patients.*



## The Facts about Head Lice

- Head lice are small insects (about the size of a sesame seed when fully grown) that live very close to the scalp.
- Nits are not the same as lice. Nits are the empty egg cases which stick to the hair.
- You only have head lice if you find a living, moving louse (not a nit).
- Anybody can get head lice – adults and children.
- Head lice don't care if the hair is dirty or clean, short or long.
- A lot of infections are caught from close family and friends in the home and community, not necessarily at school.
- Head lice can walk from one head to another, if the heads are pressed together for some time. They do not fly, jump or swim.
- Regular hair care may help to spot lice early.
- The best way to stop infection is for families to check their heads regularly using detection combing.
- If you think you or are a member of your family have head lice save a specimen of the lice and take it to your local pharmacist for advice and treatment as necessary.
- If you are entitled to free prescriptions you will obtain any treatment prescribed free.
- You need to find where the lice came from or you may be reinfected. The source is probably a family member or close friend, who probably doesn't know they have lice.

## How to detect head lice

You will need:

### A PLASTIC DETECTOR COMB.

(These are available from your pharmacist – ask for help if there are none on display).

- (1) Wash the hair well and towel until damp, but not dripping.
- (2) Ensure that there is **good lighting** – daylight is best.
- (3) First, comb the hair with an ordinary comb. Then, using the detector comb, begin at the top of the head and making sure that the comb is touching the scalp, slowly draw the comb towards the ends of the hair.
- (4) Check the teeth of the comb carefully.
- (5) Repeat steps (3) and (4) working your way around the head from the top of the scalp to the ends of the hair. This should take 10 to 15 minutes.

**If there are head lice, you will find one or more on the teeth of the comb**

- (6) If you find lice, or something which you are unsure about, stick it to a piece of paper with clear sticky tape and take it to your GP or local pharmacist.

**The best way to stop infection is to do detection combing regularly.**

**NEVER use insecticidal liquids, lotions or shampoos to PREVENT infection, or just in case.**



## How to treat head lice



**DO NOT TREAT UNLESS YOU ARE SURE YOU HAVE FOUND A LIVING, MOVING LOUSE.**

**Ask your pharmacist which head louse lotion or liquid to use. Most have clear instructions for use;**

In a well ventilated room...

- (1) Apply the lotion or liquid to **dry** hair.
- (2) Part the hair near the top of the head, put a few drops of the lotion or liquid on to the scalp and rub in. Part the hair again a bit further down the scalp and rub in some more of the lotion or liquid. Do this again until the whole scalp is wet. You don't need to take the lotion or liquid any further than where you would put a ponytail band. Take care not to get the lotion or liquid in the eyes or on the face.

**You should use at least one small bottle of lotion or liquid per head, more if the hair is thick.**

- (3) Let the lotion or liquid dry on the hair naturally. Keep away from naked flames, cigarettes or other sources of heat. Do NOT use a hair dryer.
- (4) Leave the hair for 12 hours or overnight. Then, wash and rinse as normal.
- (5) Repeat the entire treatment seven days later, using a second bottle of the same lotion or liquid.
- (6) Check the head two days after the second treatment. If you still find living, moving lice ask your pharmacist or GP for advice.
- (7) If you wish to remove the nits, comb the hair, while wet, with a metal nit comb.