

Head lice are tiny insects that live in hair; they are a common problem, especially in children. Head lice are largely harmless, but if not treated they can be irritating and frustrating to deal with. Nits is a word used to describe the empty egg cases attached to hair that head lice hatch from.

What are the symptoms of head lice?

Head lice lay small white eggs or nits (egg cases) often in the hair behind the ears or at the back of the neck. This can cause an itchy head and a rash on the back of the neck. Often people with head lice report feelings that something is moving in their hair.

What do head lice look like?

Head lice are very small whitish or grey-brown insects. They can be difficult to see even when looking closely. It is often the white eggs in the hair that can be seen.



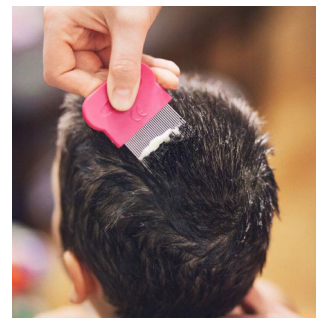
How do I protect me and my family?

Head lice and nits can usually be removed from the hair by combing wet hair regularly with a special fine-toothed comb which you can buy from a pharmacy or supermarket. Usually, you do not need to see a doctor.

How to wet comb hair

Wash hair as normal and apply lots of conditioner. Comb the hair using the special fine-toothed comb from roots to ends for 10 minutes for short hair and up to 30 minutes for long or curly hair. You will need to repeat this every 4 days: on days 5, 9 and 13 to remove any newly hatched eggs.

If wet combing has not worked and you can still see head lice or nits, you can try a special safe treatment spray or lotion. Your pharmacist or doctor can advise you on the best treatment. Always check the pack to see if the treatment is ok for you or your child and follow the instructions on how to apply safely.



Where to get treatment from?

Safe and effective treatment for head lice is available to buy from pharmacies.

What should I do at home?

You may wish to wash your bedding and towels on the same day you start the head lice treatment. Check other family members' hair frequently for signs of head lice as they spread easily. They may need to wet comb too. Cleaning more than normal is not required.

How do I stop the spread?

It is very difficult to stop someone catching head lice although regular wet combing can catch any head lice early. Lotions and sprays do not prevent head lice and should only be used if a live louse has been found in hair. You do not need to keep your child off school if they have head lice.

If you have questions about head lice, need support or treatment take this leaflet to your local pharmacy and they will be able to help you.