

HEAD LICE

What is Head lice?

Head lice are tiny wingless insects that live in the hair.

Head lice are between 1mm and 3mm long which can be as large as a match head when fully grown.

They cannot fly, hop or jump.

Their claws are specially adapted to allow them to grip the hair.

Their eggs are layed at night by the adult louse.

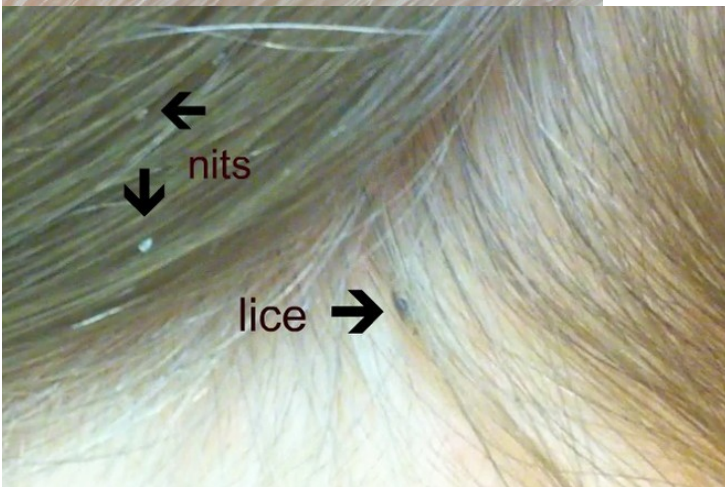
The eggs take 7-10 days to hatch. They live up to 40 days.

Nits are the empty egg cases attached to the hair that head lice hatch from.

Head lice are a common problem, particularly in school children aged from 4-11 years.

They're largely harmless, but can live in the hair for a long time if not treated and can be irritating and frustrating to deal with.





How is it diagnosed?

Head lice can be difficult to spot, even when the head is closely inspected. They're very small whitish or grey-brown insects that range from the size of a pinhead to the size of a sesame seed.

The only way to be sure someone had head lice is to find a live louse by combing their hair with a special fine-toothed comb. This is called detection combing.

Less reliable signs of head lice include:

Small white eggs or nits (egg cases) in the hair behind the ears or at the back of the neck

An itchy scalp

A rash on the back of the neck

Feeling as though something is moving in the hair

Detection combs are special fine-toothed plastic combs that you can buy from your local pharmacy, supermarket or online. A comb with a flat-faced teeth and a tooth spacing of 0.2-0.3mm is best.

Detection combing can be carried out on dry or wet hair. Dry combing takes less time, but wet combing is more accurate because washing with conditioner stops head lice moving.

Wet detection combing



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To use the wet detection method:

Wash the hair with ordinary shampoo and apply plenty of conditioner

Use an ordinary, wide –toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair

Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb

Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots, with the edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp

Draw the comb down from the roots to the ends of the hair with every stroke, and check the comb for lice each time – remove lice by wiping the comb with tissue paper or rinsing it

Work through the hair, section by section, so that the whole head of hair is combed through

Do this at least twice to help ensure you haven't missed any areas and continue until you find no more lice.

Dry detection combing

To use the dry detection method:

Use an ordinary wide toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair

Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb

Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots, with the edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp

Draw the comb down from the crown to the ends of the hair with every stroke

Look for lice as the comb is drawn through the hair. If you see a louse, trap it against the face of the comb with your thumb to stop if being repelled by static electricity

Comb each section of hair 3 or 4 times before moving on to the next section, until the whole head has been combed through

If you find head lice, you should check the rest of your family. Treat everyone found to have head lice on the same day.

PLEASE NOTE: Head lice eradication products: risk of serious burns if treated hair is exposed to open flames or other sources of ignition, eg, cigarettes



Your Healthcare Community Interest Company

Registered office: Hollyfield House, 22 Hollyfield Road, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 9AL Registered in England and Wales number 06762290
VAT number 945 9106 03



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