

Head Lice – Treating Head Lice

Head Lice are difficult to remove because of their size, infestation rate, life cycle and their ability to develop immunity to insecticides.

Once an infestation is confirmed, the lice can be treated at home using either the wet combing method or medicated lotions (see below).

Neither method will protect against reinfection if head-to-head contact is made with someone with head lice at a later date.

Wet combing method

The wet combing ('bug busting') method involves physically removing lice using a special fine-toothed comb with a spacing of less than 0.3mm. Your pharmacist can advise you about which combs are suitable.

Wet combing does not use chemical treatments. This method can be helpful because head lice are growing increasingly resistant to the insecticides used to remove them.

However, success depends on adopting a painstaking approach of regular and thorough combing.

The best procedure to follow is described below.

Wash hair as normal using an ordinary shampoo

Apply conditioner liberally to wet hair (this causes the lice to lose their grip on the hair)

Comb the hair through with a normal comb first, until the comb runs freely

Using a special fine-toothed comb, comb from the roots along the complete length of the hair

After each stroke, check the comb for lice and wipe it clean. Work methodically over the whole head for at least 30 minutes

Rinse the hair as normal

Repeat every three days for at least two weeks

You can buy a 'Bug Buster' kit, which includes an illustrated guide and combs, from some pharmacies and by mail order from the Community Hygiene Concern website.

Only one kit is needed for a family and it is reusable. You will need to repeat the session every three days for at least two weeks to clear the lice. If the person catches more lice, the half-weekly sessions must continue.

