

Head Lice Tips for Parents

If you do find head lice, do not panic. Please follow the steps below.

1. You should examine your child's head, especially near the ears and at the back of the head/neck, for crawling lice and nits if your child exhibits symptoms of a head lice infestation. If crawling lice or nits are found, all household members should be examined for crawling lice and nits every 2–3 days. Persons with live (crawling) lice or nits should be treated.
2. To eliminate head lice successfully, it is very important that all treatment instructions and steps be carefully followed and completed.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not make recommendations as to what specific product or products should be used to treat individuals. Both over-the-counter and prescription products are available. You may wish to contact your doctor, pharmacist, or health department for additional information about which product they recommend.
4. Before applying treatment, it may be helpful to remove clothing that can become wet or stained during treatment.
5. Apply lice medicine, also called pediculicide, according to the instructions contained in the box or printed on the label. If the infested person has very long hair (longer than shoulder length), it may be necessary to use a second bottle. Pay special attention to instructions on the label or in the box regarding how long the medication should be left on the hair and how it should be washed out.
 - a. Do not use a combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for 1–2 days after using the lice medicine.
6. Have the infested person put on clean clothing after treatment.
7. If a few live lice are still found 8–12 hours after treatment, but are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. The medicine may take longer to kill all the lice. Comb dead and any remaining live lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit comb.
8. If, after 8–12 hours of treatment, no dead lice are found and lice seem as active as before, the medicine may not be working. Do not retreat until speaking with your health care provider; a different pediculicide may be necessary. If your health care provider recommends a different pediculicide, carefully follow the treatment instructions contained in the box or printed on the label.
9. Nit (head lice egg) combs, often found in lice medicine packages, should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft. Many flea combs made for cats and dogs are also effective.
10. After each treatment, checking the hair and combing with a nit comb to remove nits and lice every 2–3 days may decrease the chance of self-reinfestation. Continue to check for 2–3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone.
11. Retreatment is meant to kill any surviving hatched lice before they produce new eggs. For some drugs, retreatment is recommended routinely about a week after the first treatment (7–9 days, depending on the drug) and for others only if crawling lice are seen during this period. Retreatment with lindane shampoo is not recommended.

Head Lice Tips for Parents – continued

Supplemental Measures: Head lice do not survive long if they fall off a person and cannot feed. Follow these steps to help avoid re-infestation by lice that have recently fallen off the hair or crawled onto clothing or furniture.

1. Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, backpacks, and other items that the infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle for no less than 20 minutes. Clothing, stuffed animals, and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned **OR** sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
2. Soak combs and brushes in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes. Wash hair ribbons and other hair ties as well.
3. Vacuum the floor, furniture, and vehicles, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, the risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a rug or carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 1–2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp.
4. Do not use fumigant sprays; they can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.