

Treating Lice

Lice treatment is not always successful, and many parents have to deal with the fact that head lice keep coming back. Yet many people also overlook **the most crucial step** in their battle against these parasites: **combing lice and nits (eggs)**. Combing with a **lice comb** is actually one of the best and most reliable treatments for head lice.

The **areas of your head that lice favor** the most are the back of the neck and behind the ears. So, these should be given special attention. Lice feed on your blood, and in those areas it is easier for them to get to it. Those areas of the head are the warmest, so most nits are laid there.

The combing out of head lice and nits is not a one-time treatment. **It has to be done over and over again** for several days in a row. Live lice may lay more nits and you should not allow for those nits to hatch.

Lice/Nit combing is a time consuming task. It should be done thoroughly and may take a couple of hours every time you do it. It can be tiresome for kids, so make sure to provide them with some kind of entertainment during this process.

The Process

Step One: TREAT

- Treat your child's hair with **lice killing shampoo**. You can buy this shampoo at most grocery stores or Walgreens. Be sure to follow the directions exactly as written.
- You may prefer to check with your child's doctor about getting a **prescription shampoo treatment** that is often more effective than over-the counter shampoos.

Step Two: COMB

- Cover your child's shoulders and back with a **white towel**. It will help protect them from lice going under their clothes. You can also see them more easily when they drop onto a white towel.

- Next, give the hair a very **thorough combing** with the nit comb. The lice shampoo does not often kill all of the eggs (nits), so combing out is extremely important! Try to comb as close to the scalp as possible.
- Go **lock by lock**, selecting small portions of hair. You may braid them after you are done with combing each lock or, you may move from one side of the head to another, separating the brushed hair from the unbrushed hair. You can **clip it together** with a clip to keep it separated.

Helpful Hints:

- *Nits are located high up in the hair, very close to the head (usually within half an inch).*
- *The combing and hair inspection should be done in clear light or sunlight.*
- *Lice are sensitive to light, and they're fast. They'll scurry the minute you expose them, so work quickly while still making sure to cover every area.*
- **If you are struggling to remove nits, try these tips;**
 - For **thin hair**, first dip the comb in conditioner. Any thick kind will do. White conditioner works best because you can see the bugs against it more easily. You can then dip it in a dish of baking soda which adds abrasion.
 - For **coarse hair**, dip the comb only in conditioner.

Step Three: DISINFECT COMB

- When you're finished, boil the comb for a few minutes or soak it in hot water for 20 minutes. Wipe the comb clean.

Step Three: COMB AGAIN

- **Comb the hair again** with the nit comb, this time working through slightly larger, inch-thick sections.
- Repeat this step **every day for five days**.
- **Change your child's pillowcase and bath towel** on each of these five days.

Helpful Hints:

- One trick you may try prior to combing out your child's hair the second time is to wet the hair, apply conditioner and then wrap it in a towel to remove the bulk of the water.

Step Four: DELOUSE THE HOUSE

- On the first day, **wash your child's bedding**. Also dry pillows, stuffed animals, and the comforter on high for 20 to 30 minutes. If items cannot be washed and dried, seal them in a plastic bag for two weeks.
- **Change your child's pillowcase and bath towel** each day for five days starting the day treatment begins.
- **Wash all brushes** either on the top rack of the dishwasher, soak them in ammonia for 20 minutes, or boil them for a few minutes.
- **Roll a sticky lint brush** over the top half of the bedding each day for five days.
- **Vacuum** rugs or furniture your child has lounged on in the past 48 hours (which is the maximum length of time a louse can live off of the human head).

Step Five: FOLLOW UP

- **Two weeks** from your first comb-out, do it one more time. Often times, this is the part people don't do because they think they've taken care of everything after those first few days. ***Do not skip this step! If you left just one nit, the whole process can start over again.***

References:

<https://www.parents.com/kids/health/head-lice/lice-removal-tips-secrets-of-a-nitpicker/>
2018, December 10.

<https://headlicecenter.com/lice-comb/>
2018, December 10.