

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH AUTHORITY COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL TEAM HEAD LICE POLICY

Reviewed: October 2022

Next Review: October 2024

Appendix 1 HEAD LICE ADVICE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

These notes are intended for families. Please photocopy as appropriate for parents/guardians.

THE FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

- Head lice are small insects (about the size of a sesame seed when fully grown) that live very close to the scalp.
- Nits are not the same as lice. Nits are the empty egg cases which stick to the hair.
- You only have head lice if you find a living, moving louse (not a nit).
- Anybody can get head lice – adults and children, even grandparents.
- Head lice don't care if the hair is dirty or clean, long or short.
- A lot of infections are caught from close family and friends in the home and community, not school.
- Head lice can walk from one head to another, if the heads are pressed together for some time. They do not fly, jump or swim.
- Regular hair care may help to spot lice early.
- The best way to stop infection is for families to check their heads regularly using detection combing.

Detection Combing

You need: Plastic detection comb (from the chemist)
Good lighting
Ordinary comb
Conditioner (optional)

1. Wash the hair well, towel dry until damp but not dripping.
2. First comb the hair with an ordinary comb (you may put some conditioner on hair first to make combing easier).
3. Then, using the detection comb, touching the skin of the scalp at the top of the head, slowly draw the comb towards the end of the hair.
4. Carefully check the teeth of the comb in good light.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 working your way around the head from the top of the scalp to the ends of the hair. This will probably take 10-15 minutes.
6. If there are head lice you will find one or more on the teeth of the comb. Clean the comb under running water – a nailbrush helps to do this.
7. If you find lice, or something which you are unsure about, stick it onto a piece of paper with clear sticky tape and show it to your school nurse, GP or local chemist.

The best way to stop infection is to do combing regularly (weekly including in school holidays). Never use insecticidal liquids, lotions or shampoos to PREVENT infection or just in case.

HOW TO TREAT HEAD LICE

DO NOT TREAT UNLESS YOU ARE SURE YOU HAVE FOUND **A LIVING, MOVING LOUSE**.

Ask your GP, Practice Nurse, Health Visitor, School Nurse or Pharmacist which head louse lotion or liquid to use and how long to leave it on.

Do **NOT** use head louse shampoo.

Do **NOT** use head louse treatments on your family “just in case”.

In a well ventilated room...

If you are sure you have a living louse:

1. Apply the lotion or liquid to **dry** hair (checking pack instructions carefully on length of time treatment should be left on).
2. Part the hair near the tip of the head, put a few drips of the lotion or liquid on to the scalp and rub in some more of the lotion or liquid. Do this again and again until the whole scalp is wet. You don't need to take the lotion or liquid any further than where you would put a pony tail band. Take care not to get the lotion or liquid in the eyes or on the face.

You should use at least one small bottle of lotion or liquid per head, more if the hair is thick.

3. Let the lotion or liquid dry on the hair naturally. Keep well away from naked flames, cigarettes or other sources of heat. Do **NOT** use a hair dryer. The period of time that the treatment is on the hair (contact time) is important if the treatment is to be successful and therefore must be adhered to. Always check the manufacturer's instruction for the correct contact time.
4. Then, wash and rinse as normal. Repeat the entire treatment seven days later, using a second bottle of the same lotion or liquid.
5. Check the head two days after the second treatment. If you still find living, moving lice, ask your pharmacist, school nurse, health visitor, practice nurse or GP for advice.
6. Remove the nits (egg cases) by combing the hair, while wet, with a metal nit comb.

CONTACT TRACING

You need to find where the lice came from or you may be reinfected. The source is probably a family member or close friend, who probably doesn't know they have lice.

Use the checklist to make sure you get in touch with everyone who has been in close (head to head) contact with the infected person. All the people on your list should check themselves and their families for head lice using detection combing. Anyone who is infected with living, moving lice should be treated straight away.

REMEMBER

It doesn't matter how many nits you have, or how itchy your scalp is – if you can't find a living, moving louse, you don't have head lice.

The problem won't go away?

DID YOU...

- ... use enough lotion or liquid?
- ... apply it correctly?
- ... let it dry naturally?
- ... leave it on for the correct contact time?
- ... use a second bottle, 7 days after the first?
- ... check all your close family and friends?
- ... check adults as well as children?
- ... treat all infected contacts at the same time?

Contact check list:

	Contacted
Parents	
Grandparents	
Brothers/Sisters	
Sons/Daughters	
Aunts/Uncles	
Cousins	
Nieces/Nephews	
Friends	
Lodgers	
School/Nursery	
Babysitter	
Clubs/Brownies/Guides/Cubs/Scouts	
Other	