



School Nurse Top Tips Head Lice Advice for Parents

Are Head Lice and Nits the same thing?

Head lice are the tiny grey or brown insects that are found in the hair. The lice are about the size of a small seed (e.g. sesame seed) and cling to the hair staying close to the scalp which they live off. These lice lay eggs which take from 7 to 10 days to hatch. Each new hatching can take up to 10 days to be fully grown.

Nits are the empty shells left after lice have hatched. It looks very much like dandruff but as it clings to the hair it makes it very difficult to brush out.

How can my child catch head lice?

Head lice are spread by head-to-head contact where lice climb from the hair of an infected person to the hair of someone else. Head lice only affect humans and cannot be passed on to animals or be caught from them.

- Have a look under a good light, such as a lamp or the natural sunlight by sitting at a window or going outdoors.
- Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo and apply plenty of conditioner, before using a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair (this makes it easier to divide the hair into sections and fasten off the hair that is not being worked on).
- Use a 'nit' comb to detect the presence of lice and nits, (you can pick one of these up from your local chemist). Using the comb, go through each section of the hair. Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots, with the bevel-edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp.
- Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair with every stroke, and check the comb for lice. Clean the comb after each stroke by dipping the comb in a cup of water, or use a paper towel to remove eggs, lice and/or nits.
- Work methodically through the hair, section by section, so that the whole head is combed through. Look through each section of the hair for attached nits (lice eggs) and live lice.
- Nits are always oval-shaped. While usually greyish-white they can vary in color. Nits are generally laid close to the scalp but can be found anywhere on the hair shaft.
- Rinse out conditioner and repeat the combing procedure.



- If using lice killing products it is important to remember that these are pesticides. If you choose to purchase an over-the-counter treatment, follow the directions carefully. Consult your pharmacist or doctor if your child has allergies, asthma, epilepsy, pre-existing medical conditions or has lice or nits in their eye brows or eyelashes. **Never use an over-the-counter treatment on or near the eyes.**



- According to NICE Guidelines, (2016) there is no need to treat (wash at high temperature or fumigate) clothing or bedding that has been in contact with lice, as the lifespan of a head louse is very short (12–24 hours) once it is detached from a human head. However, washing pillows and stuffed toys could help in the prevention of your child getting head lice/nits again.



- Repeat the procedure on days 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15, so that you clear young lice as they hatch, before they have time to reach maturity (and start laying new eggs).
- Even under the best of conditions, a few lice or nits may be missed. Use a comb to check the hair every day; it can take up to 14 days for one infestation to clear, and then check regularly afterwards. Seeing a nit or two the next day does not necessarily mean and re-infestation. However, be sure to remove them immediately.

Please Remember:

A regular check of your child's hair will help to control head lice. If additional nits are discovered at least 3-5 per day, this may be a sign that live lice may still be on the head. When you brush your child's hair in the morning or at night always have a quick check.

Screen safely and regularly

Detect lice and nits as early as possible

Remove lice and nits immediately and effectively

Avoid panic and unnecessary use of chemicals

Keep children in school lice and nit free

If you have any concerns regarding head lice please contact your pharmacist/chemist.

If you have any concerns regarding your child's health please contact **01933 414934**- many thanks from your Children and Young Peoples Nursing Team

Working together, with you, to keep your child healthy.