

Medical Entomology Centre



Insect Research & Development Limited

6 Quay Court
Colliers Lane
Stow-cum-Quy
Cambridge
CB25 9AU

www.insectresearch.com

The school has asked us to put together some information on head louse detection and treatment. If after reading the information you have any questions then please contact the MEC on **01223 813696**. We would be happy to offer advice and guidance.

Head Lice



Adults are 2-3.5 mm long

The males are smaller than the females but both are easily visible.

Transmission is by lice crawling from one head to another during close head to head contact. They do not jump or fly.



Eggs are glued to hair shafts close to the scalp where it is warm and humid.

Empty eggshells (nits) remain attached long after hatching and can easily be seen on the hair.



There are three stages of lice before they reach adults. The first two stages are very small and remain close to the scalp.



Treatment Guidance for Head Lice

Detection

- It is recommended that hair is checked at least once a week using a fine-toothed plastic detection comb.
- After hair washing is a good time.

Telephone: 08454 300300 International: +44 1223 813696 Facsimile: 01223 810078

Registered in England Registration No. 4375595 VAT No. 783 9593 63

- Fine-toothed metal combs are not ideal as they catch and pull the hair which can cause it to break off at the roots. Using these combs can also be quite painful.
- If lice are found then everyone in the family should be checked and treated if necessary.
- Lice vary in size from a full stop when newly hatched to the size of a sesame seed when fully grown.

Treatment

- The best way to eliminate head lice is to use either a silicone based lotion or an insecticidal lotion; your local pharmacist should be able to advise you on which are most effective in your area.
- Silicone products are effective as they are relatively new and there are no resistance problems.
- Chemical insecticides are quite old and there are some resistance issues so potentially they will not be as effective.
- There is little scientific evidence for the efficacy of herbal products.
- Follow the treatment instructions carefully and leave on the head for the recommended time.
- At the end of the treatment time comb through the hair with a head louse detection comb to remove any dead lice before washing off as per the usage instructions.
- **Repeat the treatment one week to ten days later – this will kill any freshly emerged nymphs (little lice)**

Effectiveness

- It is useful to comb between treatments to see if the treatment has worked.
- If adult lice and small lice are present after the first treatment it is possible that these lice are resistant to the treatment used. If so then a different product should be used for the second treatment.
- If very small lice are found then the treatment used has successfully killed the larger lice but not the eggs. Therefore a second treatment with the same product will kill any newly emerged nymphs.
- **A second treatment with any product is to kill newly hatched lice and must be done to kill all head lice.**

Alternative

- Methods like conditioner and combing may also work but this requires combing every other day consistently, carefully, and methodically. This can take considerable time to clear an infestation. Once all the lice are gone combing still has to be maintained in the same way until all of the remaining eggs have hatched.