



Head Lice

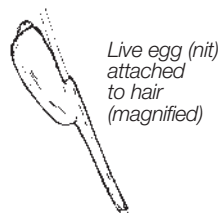
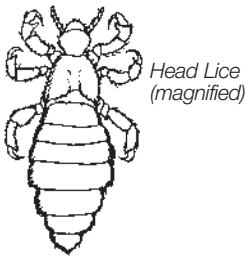


Head lice are spread by head-to-head contact with someone who already has head lice. Having head lice is not a sign of poor hygiene and head lice do not carry or spread other diseases. Anyone can catch head lice at any age. Ask a pharmacist how to find and treat head lice.

Head lice are wingless insects that make their home on people's scalps. They are often difficult to see. Their favourite hiding places are behind the ears and at the back of the neck. Head lice feed on human blood and their bite can be itchy.

Female lice lay their eggs near the bases of hair strands, usually within 1.5 cm of the scalp. The eggs are glued to the hair strands and hatch in about seven days. The eggs are also called nits.

Individual lice cannot live for more than a few days off the head.



Signs and symptoms

- Tickling or itching feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Skin sores caused by scratching – which can become infected.
- Pale, white specks (the eggs) stuck to bases of hair strands, that do not fall out when the hair is shaken.
- Tiny dark lice on the scalp or hair.

Finding head lice (detection combing)

An easy way to find lice and eggs is the 'conditioner and comb' or 'bug-busting' method:

- Apply to DRY hair, enough hair conditioner to cover each hair strand from root to tip. Apply the conditioner evenly and detangle hair
- Comb the conditioner through hair with a lice comb – ask a pharmacist
- Start at the scalp and work through the hair carefully in sections
- After each stroke, wipe the conditioner off the comb onto a paper tissue and look for lice and eggs. Remove all eggs and lice from the comb after each stroke
- Repeat the combing at least twice for every part of the head and then thoroughly rinse the hair.

Hair conditioner makes it hard for the lice to cling to the hair or crawl away. Any type of hair conditioner may be used.

Important

Head lice products can kill living lice and eggs, but do not protect people from getting head lice. Frequent or regular use of head lice products can cause scalp irritation and may allow lice to develop resistance to treatments.

Consult a doctor or pharmacist if:

- There are signs of infection (e.g., weeping and crusting on the skin; swollen glands; fever)
- Lice are still present after treatment with a head lice product.

Removing head lice

Head lice can sometimes be successfully removed by the 'conditioner and comb' method, done every day until no lice or eggs are found for 10 days. An electrified comb is available from some pharmacies.

A more reliable way of removing head lice is to use a special 'insecticide-type' head lice product. These products are available as shampoos, mousses, conditioners, lotions and sprays.

When using head lice products:

- Read and follow manufacturer's instructions carefully
- Do not use on children under two years of age without a doctor's advice
- Do not use near heaters or open fires as some are highly flammable – check the label
- Use enough to thoroughly cover the hair and scalp, including the back of the neck and behind the ears
- Protect eyes with a shield. If some product does get into eyes, rinse out with water immediately
- Dry hair with a towel (do not use a hair drier, as heat can inactivate the treatment)
- Itching may continue for one week after the head lice have been killed
- No single treatment kills 100% of eggs. Apply the product a second time, 7-10 days after the first application, to kill lice that may have hatched since the first treatment. In between applications, remove eggs every one or two days by combing, or use a product specially designed to help remove eggs
- Lice can become resistant to some products. After each treatment always check that all lice have been killed. If lice are not killed, a different product may be needed. Ask a pharmacist.

Contacts

School children often get and spread head lice. If your child has head lice you are advised to inform their school and everyone your child has been in close contact with over the past few weeks. This includes family and friends, young and old. Tell them to check themselves and their families for head lice. Only those who have head lice need to be treated and members of the same household who have lice should be treated at the same time. Children can be sent back to school after the first treatment.

Self care

- Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a head lice product.
- Only use a head lice product if you find living lice.
- Check hair for head lice or eggs at least once a week (detection combing) for several weeks after treatment.
- After use, soak combs and brushes in a container of near-boiling water for at least 30 seconds.
- Wash towels, sheets, pillow cases and headwear in hot water.
- Place items that can't be washed (e.g., soft toys and helmets) in airtight plastic bags for two weeks.
- Do not share hats, hairbrushes and combs.

For more information

Health/Insite – website www.healthinsite.gov.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflets – your pharmacist can advise on availability.

NPS Medicines Line – phone 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm EST.

The Poisons Information Centre – in case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacy Self Care Support – phone 1300 369 772 and ask for the Pharmacy Self Care Field Officer.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist



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