

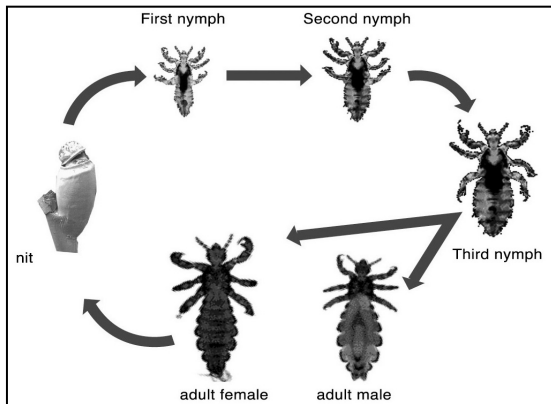
Head lice – a growing problem

Head lice have become a growing problem during the last ten years. It is mostly children between 3-11 years of age that are affected. Usually the problem is noted at the beginning of each school term, but infestations occur all year long. This leaflet has been produced to give parents more information about head lice and different methods of treatment.

Head lice can neither fly nor jump. To get lice it is necessary to have close hair contact with an infested person. Having lice is not a sign of bad hygiene. Lice actually like clean hair the best. It is important that you let everyone around you know if you are infested so that you can track the origin of the infestation. Everyone who is infested should be treated at the same time to avoid recurrent infestation. To discover lice infestations at an early stage and to quicker get rid of the problem, it is advisable to regularly comb the hair with a lice comb.

How do I discover lice infestations?

Lice are small, 2-3 mm long and often have a greyish colour. Sometimes they seem to have the same colour as your hair. Lice are usually found near the scalp where they lay their eggs (nits), especially behind the ears or near the neck line. Lice bite through the skin to feed on human blood. It is the bites that itch and usually what makes you discover the lice. Some people, especially adults, can be infested and not feel any itching. It is therefore recommended to comb all family members with a lice comb on a regular basis in order to discover any infestations.



Louses' biological life cycle

The louses' biological lifecycle

A louse can live up to 6 weeks. There are three stages in the louses' biological lifecycle: from egg (nit) to nymph to adult louse. It takes aprox. 10 days for a nit to hatch into a nymph. From nymph to adult louse it takes around 9 days. It takes about 3 weeks before the cycle from egg to new eggs and louse is closed. A female louse can lay between 150-300 eggs. Without treatment it is possible to get a huge amount of lice in just a couple of weeks. I.e. if you get infested with two lice, in a couple of weeks you can have over 200 eggs and nits. Nymphs can be difficult to discover, but when they start feeding on blood they become darker and easier to spot.

Louse eggs are aprox. 1 mm and are also called nits. They range in colour from off-white to brown and sometimes look like tiny drops of water attached to single strands of hair. Nits are attached to the hair with a strong glue like substance, which makes them very difficult to remove. As nits are laid close to the scalp, and hair is constantly growing, their placement on the strand of hair gives an indication of when the infestation occurred. Since human hair grows at around a centimetre per month, the distance from the scalp to where you find the empty egg shells gives you an indication as to when the eggs were first laid. Empty egg shells are lighter in colour (yellow/white) than unhatched eggs (brown).

Nit attached to hair, enlarged.



Nit and empty egg shell, natural size.

The earlier you can disrupt the louses' biological life cycle, the earlier you can get rid of the problem. It is therefore very important to be thorough when combing the hair so that all unhatched eggs are really removed.

Lice is not caused by bad hygiene!

Many people are ashamed to tell others that they are infested with lice, thinking it's caused by bad hygiene. This is certainly not the case! Lice prefers to live in clean rather than dirty hair, as it is easier for them to move around and attach their eggs to clean hair. Today's problem with larger lice infestations is probably more due to poor knowledge of lice and little time dedicated to screening and regularly combing with lice combs. Many people are also afraid of telling others that they are infested!

Different types of treatments

There are different types of products to treat head lice. The most common used are chemicals products, alternative natural products and plastic or metal lice combs. Combing with a lice comb is an important part in all treatment against head lice.

Chemical lice killing products

Chemical lice killing products have ingredients that affect the louses' central nerve system and kill them. These products do not affect the louses' eggs, therefore the chemical treatment must be repeated after aprox. 10 days in order to kill all newly hatched nymphs. It takes around 2 weeks to get rid of lice with these kinds of treatments. The products are classified as medical drugs and are either prescription based or sold over the counter. Chemical lice killing products are strong and can cause allergic reactions among allergic or sensitive persons.

Alternative natural products

Natural products are often oil based: anise oil, coconut or tee-tree oil are examples of oils that are used. The oil suffocates the lice by sealing their air vents. Oil can also make it difficult for the louse to attach its eggs to the hair. The products do not affect the louse eggs, and treatment must be repeated after aprox. 10 days in order to kill newly hatched nymphs. It takes around 2 weeks to get rid of lice with these kinds of treatments. The products can cause allergic reactions to those who are allergic or sensitive to the oil ingredients or smells.

Lice combs

Lice combs are used to screen for or remove lice. The quality of lice combs vary a great deal. Many combs are made of plastic with short teeth. They tend not to be tight enough and to loose shape when used, which makes it harder to remove lice, especially in long hair.

Today there is a special kind of lice comb that not only removes lice but also is able to remove nits effectively. NitFree lice comb has micro grooved teeth, which makes it possible to destroy and remove both eggs as well as lice from the hair. This comb is a perfect alternative to allergic or sensitive persons, who are not able to use chemical lice killing products.

Regardless of what type of treatment you choose to use, the most important thing is to interrupt the louses' biological lifecycle as soon as possible, so that you can get rid of the lice as soon as possible. Choose the kind of treatment or product that you think removes eggs most efficiently.

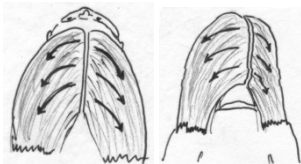
Using a lice comb is the most important!

Läkemedelsverket, Smittskyddsinstitutet, Apoteket, Barn- and Skolhälsovården among others, all point out the importance of combing with a lice comb in all treatments against lice.

How do I get the best result when combing with lice combs?

Use a regular comb or brush to untangle the hair. Keep the hair dry or wet it lightly and start combing with a tight lice comb. You can use some spray balsam to make the combing easier. To better see the lice and eggs that fall down from the comb you can use a white sheet of paper or a mirror to shake the comb on.

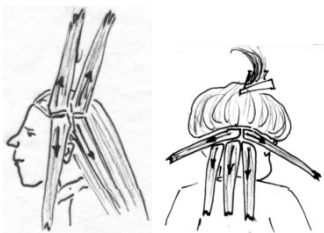
1. Start combing the crown of the head. Divide the hair into sections.



2. Comb section by section thoroughly. Those sections that have been combed should be kept separate from those not yet combed. Continue down to the neck line.



3. Be extra careful when combing the neck line and behind the ears, since lice are very fond of these areas.



Don't forget to clean all combs or brushes you might have used. Metal combs can be sterilized in boiling water.

Tip! Choose a lice comb that is very tight. You should feel some resistance when you comb through the hair. This increases the chances of removing more lice when combing.

Tips and advice against head lice

How do I avoid infestation?

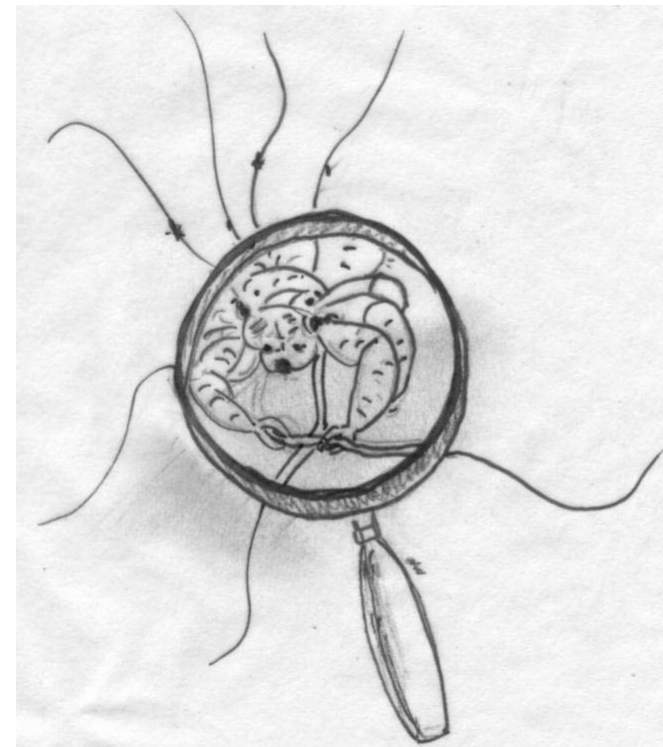
- ✓ Take the time to regularly comb your hair with a lice comb to prevent infestations. Don't forget to comb all family members! The earlier you discover to problem the earlier you'll get rid of it.
- ✓ Participate in schools' "anti-lice-campaigns".
- ✓ Be thorough when you comb. Lice and nits can be difficult to see!.
- ✓ Don't use others caps, combs or brushes.
- ✓ Don't use chemical lice killing products to prevent infestations since they can cause resistance amongst lice.

What should I do if I am infested?

- ✓ Start to thoroughly comb all family members with a lice comb to discover who are affected.
- ✓ Treat all who are affected at the same time.
- ✓ Always follow the treatments' instructions carefully.
- ✓ It is important to disrupt the louses' biological life cycle as soon as possible to decrease the amount of lice you get. Choose the treatment/product that you think removes nits most effectively.
- ✓ If you find many empty nit shells, it means that you have had the infestation a longer period. If you find few empty nit shells, it means that you have recently been infested.
- ✓ Continue to comb with a lice comb several days after you are free of lice to make sure you have gotten rid of the lice and to discover any new infestations. Use the lice comb regulary to prevent future large infestations!
- ✓ Sterilize combs and brushes by boiling them in hot water to avoid further contamination.
- ✓ Try to track the origin of the infestation. Inform other parents that you have been affected, so that they can screen their families too. If you don't, chances are you will soon have lice again. Don't be ashamed of lice! You don't get lice because of bad hygiene. Lice actually prefers clean hair!

HEAD LICE?

Comb and get LusFri.nu!



An information leaflet about problems with head lice and different methods of treatment

Produced by www.LusFri.nu

More information is available on: www.LusFri.nu and www.Avlusningsdagarna.se