



Head Lice Information for Parents and Carers

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about head lice. It tells you what head lice are, how to treat them, and where you can find out more about them.

What are head lice?

Head lice are very common. They are small grey-brown insects that mature 2-3mm long. They cannot fly or jump; neither can they burrow into the scalp. They can affect anyone with long or short hair, no matter how clean the hair is.

How can you get head lice?

They spread from person to person by prolonged head to head contact. Girls are 3-4 times more likely to contact head lice through head to head contact during play activities. Lice can also be picked up from hairbrushes and combs.

There are no complications to contracting head lice; however, they can cause severe itching for some children. This scratching may lead to infection if their skin is broken.

If you think your child has got an infection, please seek medical advice. Signs of infection may include:

- Pain
- Redness
- Oozing
- Smell



How do I know my child has head lice?

You can check your child's hair using a fine comb over a sheet of white paper for live lice and eggs (nits). Live lice will be trapped between the teeth of the comb or dislodged onto the paper.



The infestation is heaviest behind the ears and around the back of their head to the neck.

How can headlice be treated?

Lotions, liquids, shampoo and moose

Lotions/liquids/shampoos should only be used if live lice are seen. They should not be used to prevent your child catching head lice as this may cause resistance to the treatment to develop. All the treatments are available without prescription.

A second treatment is recommended seven to ten days after the first to kill the lice that have recently hatched.



Between these treatments, every day moisten your child's hair with conditioner and fine comb it to remove the newly hatched lice and eggs. Do not wash the conditioner out.

- Liquids/lotions are preferable to shampoos as contact time with the hair is longer. They may be easier to use and can be diluted with water.
- For very young children, and children with asthma, liquids such as - Derbac M, shampoos such as Lyclear crème rinse, are more suitable than alcoholic containing lotions such as - Prioderm lotion.
- It is important to follow the instructions on the product
- It is important to make sure that you cover all your child's head and hair with lotion or crème rinse for the treatment to be effective.
- All members of your family should be checked for head lice and treated if needed.

Wet Combing

Wet combing, using conditioner, every day for two weeks can be used to prevent head lice or in addition to treatment lotions.

Start on one side of your child's head and using a fine toothcomb slowly comb starting from their scalp through to the ends of their hair. Check the comb for head lice after each stroke.

Clean the comb. Repeat these strokes and work around to the other side of your child's head, making sure all their hair is treated.

On-going management

When the treatment is complete you should check every week, for a month, to ensure the infestation has cleared.

- Make sure everyone who has been in contact with your child is checked for head lice, especially members of the same household and close school friends.
- All affected members of the same household should begin treatment on the same day.
- The combs and brushes used by your child should be washed every day in hot water.

There is no need to keep children with head lice away from school as long as the advice given above is followed.

Remember: Ask your nurse if you are unsure about anything about your child's care.

Contact details

CHI Crumlin Dermatology Secretaries
014282532 and 014282646

CHI Temple Street Dermatology Department
01 878 4753

CHI Tallaght Dermatology Department
01 414 2410 or 01 414 2398

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