



HEAD LOUSE INFESTATION

Head lice are transmitted from person to person when one person's hair touches another person's hair, e.g. when children play with their heads close to each other. The symptoms include an itchy scalp. The lice may also be transmitted via headwear, towels, hair accessories, combs and brushes, but that is not as common. Head lice are not caused by poor hygiene.

The lice infestation is usually diagnosed by finding louse eggs attached to hair. They are usually found behind the ears or on the back of the head. The eggs are easiest to find by combing damp hair in accordance with the instructions below. Homes are responsible for diagnosing and treating head lice. You can buy louse combs at the pharmacy.

DIAGNOSIS

- Apply conditioner to damp hair making it easy to comb and comb any tangles with a comb or brush with sturdy teeth.
- Comb the hair backwards and part the hair in the middle.
- Start combing with the louse comb at the forehead and work your way towards the neck strand by strand.
- Each strand of hair must be combed from the root to the end using the louse comb.
- After each strand, brush the louse comb against a piece of paper towel. Then inspect the paper towel in bright lighting for any lice or louse eggs left behind on the comb or the paper. You can use a magnifying glass, when necessary.
- Continue combing the hair systematically, until half of the head has been combed and inspected. Move on to the other half of the head next.

The person is definitely infested with head lice if a single living louse is found in the hair. Louse eggs are usually also a sign of an infestation. PLEASE NOTE! Dead louse eggs often remain in the hair for some time despite treatment.

TREATMENT

- All members of the family must be inspected for head lice (according to the above instructions). Only those with a diagnosed infestation should be treated. The entire family must be treated only if the person conducting the inspection is not sure if they have found or identified lice or louse eggs.
- All infested people must be treated at the same time during the same day.
- Several different products for treating head lice are available at the pharmacy. Products containing dime-thicone (suitable for people of all ages) are the most effective. You can also try medicinal shampoo (above the age of 6 months, active ingredient permethrin), but head lice have become more resistant to it.
- Repeat the treatment after 7–10 days regardless of the instructions on the package.

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- The louse eggs hatch within ten days of being laid, which means that combing the hair daily with the louse comb after the first treatment is very important in terms of success. The hair is combed in accordance with the above directions for diagnosing the head lice infestation. Combing with the louse comb must be continued for at least two weeks after the infestation was diagnosed.
- If a living head louse is found in the hair after the second treatment, the treatment has failed and must be repeated. The combing must also be continued.
- Louse eggs may still be present after the treatment. If they are removed from the scalp (usually approx. 1 cm removed) they are very likely to be empty or dead, meaning that the treatment has not failed.

CLEANING

The adult head louse cannot survive more than a few days without nutrition, which means that excessive cleaning is not necessary. You must make sure materials that have been in contact with hair are clean.

- Materials that have been in contact with the hair of the infested person (e.g. brushes, combs, towels, headwear, hair accessories) must be removed from use for two days and cleaned daily by immersing them in hot (+60°C) water for at least 30 seconds.
- Bedding must be replaced after each treatment. The used bedding must be washed normally in 60°C.
- You do not need to clean other clothes, furniture, carpets or the inside of the car, etc.
- You do not need to treat the home with insecticide.

MISSING DAYCARE AND SCHOOL AFTER INFECTION

You do not need to stay home if you have head lice, and children do not need to be sent home from daycare or school in the middle of the day. The treatment should be performed as soon as possible after diagnosing the infestation. The child may attend school normally after the first treatment.

MORE INFORMATION ON HEAD LICE

Head lice are 1–4 mm long, flat and greyish insects that do not have wings. Lice on humans are not transferred to pets or vice versa. Head lice use human blood for sustenance and have a life span of roughly one month. Lice move quite quickly in hair, but outside the human body, lice do not move very much. They do not fly or jump and they will die of lack of nourishment in a few days. Transparent, grey, oval louse eggs that are up to 1 mm long, resembling semolina, hatch within ten days of laying. Living louse eggs are tightly attached to hair, usually less than 6 mm from the scalp. The empty, white egg shells will move away from the scalp due to hair growth. This means that you can use the location of the egg to determine whether the egg is alive or not.

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