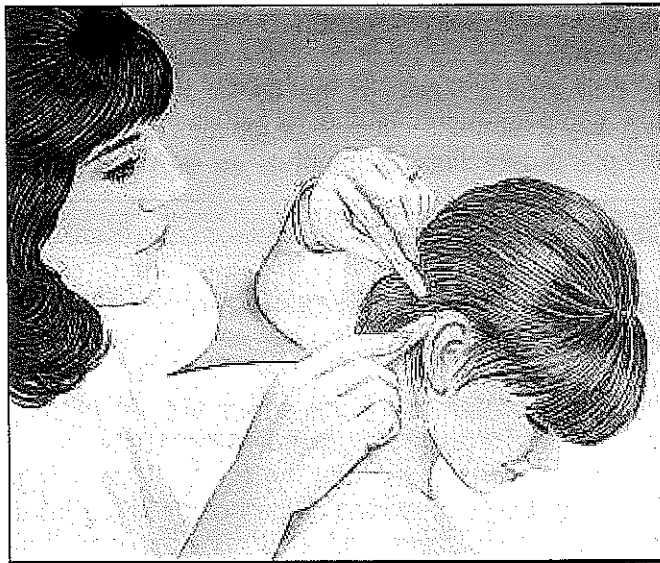




# HPA North West



## Head Lice

INFORMATION LEAFLET

### The facts about Head Lice

- Head Lice are small parasites (about the size of a sesame seed when fully grown) that live very close to the scalp.
- **Nits are not the same as lice.** Nits are the empty egg cases which stick to the hair – they are harmless.
- You only have head lice if you find living moving lice (not a nit).
- Anybody can get head lice – adults and children.
- Head lice do not care if the hair is dirty or clean, short or long.
- Most infections are caught from close family and friends in the home and community.
- Head lice can walk from one head to another, if the heads are pressed together for some time. They do not fly, jump or swim.
- Regular hair care may help to spot lice at an early stage.
- The best way to stop infection is for families to check their heads regularly using detection combing.

### How to detect Head Lice

You will need - **A Plastic Detector Comb (nit Comb)**. These are available from your pharmacist.

1. Wash the hair well and towel until damp, but not dripping.
2. Ensure that there is **good lighting** – daylight is best.
3. First, comb the hair with an ordinary comb. Then, using the detector comb, begin at the top of the head making sure that the comb is touching the scalp. Slowly draw the comb towards the ends of the hair (applying a small quantity of hair conditioner may assist with this).
4. Check the teeth of the comb carefully.
5. Repeat steps (3) and (4), working your way around the head from the top of the scalp to the ends of the hair. This should take 10 to 15 minutes – be methodical, do not try to do too much hair at once.

**If there are head lice, you will find one or more on the teeth of the comb.**

6. If you find lice, or something which you are unsure about, stick it on to a piece of paper with clear sticky tape and take it to your GP or local pharmacist.

The most effective way to detect & prevent head lice infection is by regular (weekly) detection combing. Insecticidal liquids or lotions should NEVER be used to try to PREVENT infection, or be used just in case.

### How to treat head lice

**DO NOT TREAT UNLESS YOU ARE SURE YOU HAVE FOUND A LIVING, MOVING LOUSE.**

**Ask your GP or pharmacist which head louse lotion or liquid to use. Do NOT use head louse shampoo.**

In a well ventilated room....

1. Apply the lotion or liquid to hair, following manufacturer's directions.
2. Leave on the hair as directed. Then, wash and rinse hair as normal.
3. Repeat the entire treatment seven days later, using a second application of the same lotion or liquid.
4. Check the head two days after the second application. If you still find living, moving lice ask your pharmacist, GP or school nurse for advice.
5. If you wish to remove the nits, (the harmless empty egg cases) comb the hair, while wet, with a nit comb.

### Contact Tracing

You will need to identify where the lice came from or you may become reinfected. The source is probably a family member or close friend, who probably does not know they have head lice.

#### Suggested check list:

Mother _____	Father _____	Brothers _____
Sisters _____	Grandparents _____	Aunts/Uncles _____
Cousins _____	Partners _____	Children's clubs _____
Childminders _____	Playmates _____	Friends _____

**REMEMBER – it does not matter how many nits you have, or how itchy your scalp is – if you cannot find a living, moving louse you don't have head lice.**

**The problem won't go away?**

**DID YOU.....**

- ... follow the manufacturer's instructions?
- ... apply it correctly?
- ... use enough lotion or liquid?
- ... leave it on for the correct amount of time?
- ... use a second bottle 7 days after the first?
- ... check all your close family and friends?
- ... check adults as well as children?
- ... treat all infected contacts at the same time?

**If you would like further information on Head Lice,  
please contact:**

*Your School Nurse or Health Visitor,  
The Community Pharmacist,  
The Community Infection Control Nurse at your  
local Primary Care Trust (PCT)  
or your local Health Protection Unit  
or  
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/topics>*

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