

# Head Lice

## Six Steps to Getting Rid of Head Lice

### 1. Examine

First, look at the base of the hair around the ears and across the back of the neck. Then carefully check the rest of the head.

Examine everyone in the home for lice and nits. Separate the hair strands carefully. Nits are small, white to chocolate brown, oval-shaped eggs that are glued to the hair near the scalp. Nits are more easily seen than live lice.

Treat only those household members who have head lice.

### 2. Treat

Treat the head lice with a lice treatment product. Lice treatment products are available over-the-counter at drugstores, grocery stores, and some medical clinics. These products will not kill all of the lice and nits, but they are the best way to get the process started. Carefully follow the treatment's directions on the treatment or those of your healthcare provider. Using more treatment, reapplying sooner than recommended, or keeping it on the hair longer than directed will not make it work better or faster and can increase the risk of toxic side effects.

### 3. Comb

After treatment, comb the hair with an effective, metal, lice-removal comb to remove the nits. Try to get every nit and any lice that you find.

Combing the hair in the opposite direction of normal brushing will help you find more eggs. Nit picking can also be done by hand, by using your fingernails or tweezers. Get rid of eggs in the sink, toilet, or garbage. Vacuum around the area where you were combing out eggs. Both people should change their clothes afterwards.

Comb, using the lice comb daily for seven days, and until you no longer find any lice or eggs.

This step takes the most time, energy, and patience. Combing is the most important step!

### 4. Clean

Clean your home using normal methods, such as washing clothes, towels, and bedding; vacuuming floors and furniture; and soaking combs and brushes in warm, soapy water.

### 5. Repeat

Most products recommend a second treatment 7-10 days after the first. Follow the directions just as you did for the first treatment. Afterwards, remove any eggs or lice that you might find. Continue to check daily until 1 week after the second treatment or 1 week after the last egg or louse is removed.

### 6. Notify

Notify everyone that may be affected:

- school
- church
- daycare
- friends
- family

## Head Lice Facts & Tips

- Anyone with clean or dirty hair can get head lice. It can be hard work to get rid of them.
- Head-to-head contact is the most common way lice are spread.
- Lice don't jump or fly, but they are fast crawlers. Pets do not carry human lice.
- Lice need human blood to live. They'll die within 48 hours if they can't get it. It takes the eggs about a week to hatch.
- An itchy scalp is the most common symptom of having head lice and may continue for a while after treatment.
- Lice treatment products help remove lice, but you must still physically remove the lice and nits by combing or picking them out.
- Don't panic or re-treat if you see live lice after treatment. Remove any lice you find.
- When using NIX, do not apply any type of hair conditioner, hair spray, mousse or gel, or get chlorinated pool water on treated hair for one week.
- The use of mayonnaise, kerosene, Vaseline®, vinegar, and other home remedies are not proven to be effective and can be dangerous. Shaving the head is not necessary. If you do not want to use an over-the-counter treatment product, just comb out the nits with a good lice comb.
- Notify anyone who may be affected. If possible, children should be nit-free before returning to school or childcare.

## For more information:

**Spokane Regional Health District**  
Disease Prevention and Response Division  
(509) 324-1442 | TDD (509) 324-1464

## Head Lice Resources:

### FREE PRINTED MATERIALS:

- **Booklet:** *Guidelines for Controlling Head Lice*; Information and resources, including "Setting Up A Lice Control Program/Policy"
- **Brochure:** *Head Lice: Examine, Treat, and Comb*; available in English, Spanish, Russian, Bosnian, Hmong, and Vietnamese
- **Coloring Book:** *No More Lice*; available in English, Spanish, Russian, Bosnian, and Vietnamese

To order: Call - (509) 324.1530, or email - [nhawley@spokanecounty.org](mailto:nhawley@spokanecounty.org) or download and print from - [www.srhd.org](http://www.srhd.org)

**VIDEO:** *How to Comb Out Head Lice*; 8-min. DVD, \$5 ea.

To order: Call - (509) 324.1530 or email - [nhawley@spokanecounty.org](mailto:nhawley@spokanecounty.org) or view at [www.srhd.org](http://www.srhd.org)

**PHONE:** Recorded Health Information Line: (509) 323-2847