



## **Beverley District High School**

# **Head Lice Policy**

*Updated 2014*

For further information about head lice, go to [www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice)

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## 1. Introduction

Beverley District High School has developed the following Head Lice (Pediculosis) Policy in consultation with the Department of Health and the School Nurse. The aim of this Policy is to ensure a consistent, coordinated and cooperative approach to managing Head Lice within the school community.

## 2. Roles & Responsibilities

### Parent/Carer responsibilities are to:

- Learn about Head Lice management by reading the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet*,
- Regularly check their child's hair for Head Lice;
- Treat their child's hair immediately if the child has Head Lice, using the advice in the *Head Lice Fact Sheet* or *How To Check Hair Effectively For Head Lice*;
- Inform the school and other close contacts if their child has Head Lice, to confirm that treatment of their child's hair has commenced; and
- Be aware of and follow the school's Head Lice Policy.

### The School Nurse's role is to:

- Provide information, advice and education to parents and the school community about Head Lice management when requested; and
- Provide additional advice to families experiencing persistent Head Lice infestation;

### The School's responsibility is to;

- Develop, implement and maintain a Head Lice Management Policy;
- Ensure that Parents and Staff are aware of the school's Head Lice Policy, and that they are provided with a copy of the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* through newsletters and on request; and
- Keep up to date with the latest Head Lice information and management strategies.

## 3. Other Head Lice Education and Management Strategies:

### • Head Lice Coordinator

The Deputy Principal is the Head Lice Coordinator and is the contact person for staff and parents dealing with Head Lice issues. The Deputy Principal is responsible for organising dissemination of head lice information, arranging head lice education and management activities and following up head lice information sent to parents. Parents who require information to support the school's Head Lice Policy should contact the Deputy via the school office. The Principal will coordinate issues in the absence of the D/P.

### • Head Lice management information sessions

Head lice information sessions are provided (when required) for staff and parents by the School Nurse, or the Head Lice Coordinator, to ensure the school community is well informed.

School Community members are informed about forthcoming Head Lice Management Information sessions which may be coordinated through the school and run by the Department of Health. These sessions may be attended by any interested parent or member of staff.

- **Whole school or class-by-class**

Synchronised weekend Head Lice checks at home by parents may be promoted if necessary. Information about this promotion will be provided well in advance via the newsletter and a note (Appendix 3) home to parents.

#### **4. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND TO HAVE HEAD LICE?**

The School undertakes the following steps to ensure that a clearly defined, confidential process is followed when a child is found to have Head Lice.

##### **Day 1:**

- Students are given a brief, age-appropriate explanation about Head Lice.
- A *Letter to Parents of a Child Found to have Head Lice* and *How to Check Hair Effectively for Head Lice* (Appendix 1) is sent home with the student. The letter informs the parents that their child has Head Lice and advises them that, as required by the *School Education Act 1999*, the child must commence Head Lice treatment before returning to school. A copy of the Department of Health Head Lice Fact Sheet (Appendix 4) will be included with the letter.
- Parents of the other students in the class are sent an *Information letter* plus *How to Check Hair Effectively for Head Lice* (Appendix 2) on the same day, asking them to check their child's hair for Head Lice and advising them how to do this effectively, using the Department of Health's recommended hair conditioner method.
- As a courtesy, out of town families will receive a phone call well before the child goes home.

##### **Day 2:**

- Once treatment has commenced, the parents of the child with Head Lice should send the child back to school with the completed *Confirmation of Treatment* section of the *Letter to Parents of a Child Found to have Head Lice*. Parents are reminded that treatment must be completed over the 10-day period, as recommended by the Department of Health.
- If the *Confirmation of Treatment* section or similar note is not returned and the student does not confirm that treatment has commenced, then the class teacher informs the Deputy Principal. The Deputy contacts the parents to check that they have received the *Letter to Parents*.
- If the *Letter to Parents of a Child Found to have Head Lice* has been received but no treatment has started, then the parents are asked if they are experiencing any difficulty. If the parents have no particular difficulty, then they are reminded of their responsibility to the child and to the school community. The parents are advised that the child must not return to school until treatment has begun. Parents must return a note to school with the child, or phone the Deputy Principal, Head Lice Coordinator, to confirm treatment has begun.

##### **Day 3:**

- Where a student again returns to school without treatment having commenced, the Deputy Principal may ask the School Nurse; who represents the Department of Health in the school, to undertake phone contact. This may help to identify any undisclosed difficulty and to assist the parents with the Head Lice treatment.

##### **Day 4:**

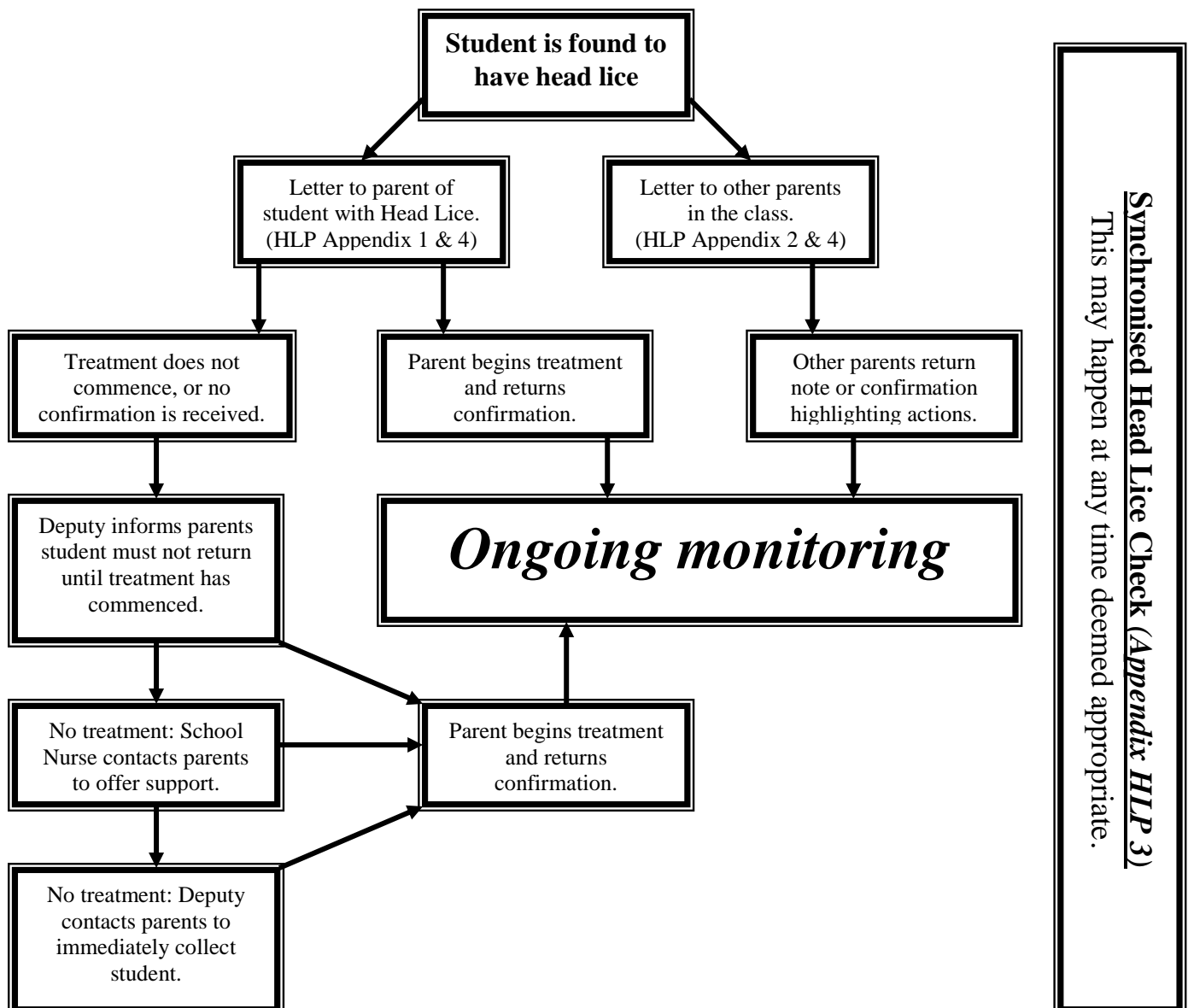
- Where a student yet again returns to school without evidence of treatment, the Deputy Principal will contact the parents and advise that the student is immediately excluded from school until treatment has commenced and the school notified.

## Day 5 – ongoing:

- Where a student continues to be absent from school without due reason, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Attendance Procedures. Where all parent support and information has been provided and there are no remaining barriers to treatment, failure to treat a student is not a valid reason for absence from school.

**In the last resort only** –The family may be referred to the Department of Child Protection, (eg where a child is experiencing ongoing psychological distress, or if infected sores result from untreated Head Lice infestation and the sores remain untreated).

## 5. Head Lice Management Flowchart



**Synchronised Head Lice Check (Appendix HLP 3)**  
This may happen at any time deemed appropriate.

## 6. ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS:

- Students with long hair must wear it tied back, braided and/or pinned.
- Students are to be discouraged from sharing hairbrushes and combs.

## 7. RECOMMENDED TREATMENTS

- The School advises parents to read the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* (Appendix 4), available from the school. The 10-Day Hair Conditioner Treatment is the Department's preferred treatment. However, parents who wish to use insecticide treatment should do so according to the Department's instructions in the *Head Lice Fact Sheet*, as labelling on some Head Lice products may be unclear or inaccurate.

## 8. CHECKING HAIR FOR HEAD LICE

### • **Class or whole school 'head checks'**

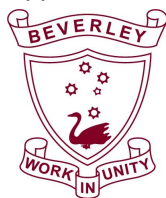
Whole class head checks for Head Lice are not undertaken, as this is not an efficient or effective strategy for Head Lice control. Head lice move at up to 30 cm per minute. They move rapidly away from searching hands and so an infestation may easily be missed. Most children do not have Head Lice, so valuable class time is wasted checking children unnecessarily. It is the responsibility of individual parents to check their own child's hair for Head Lice. Screening for Head Lice is most effectively undertaken by parents combing their child's hair with a metal 'nit' comb, using hair conditioner to slow down the Head Lice, as described in the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* or *How to check hair effectively for Head Lice*.

### • **Checking a student who is believed to have head lice**

In the case of an individual student, the Class Teacher or Deputy may examine a student's hair where there is reason to believe a student may have Head Lice, ie where eggs (nits) or crawling Head Lice have been sighted, or where a child is scratching the head excessively. The School Education Act 1999 authorises the School Principal, or a delegate, to do this.

## 9. EXCLUSION OF A STUDENT FROM SCHOOL

- Under the *School Education Act 1999*, students found to have Head Lice may be excluded from school until treatment has begun and all live Head Lice are removed, in accordance with the Department of Health treatment advice. In practice, this means students may return to school the morning after treatment has commenced; provided that effective treatment is continued consistently over the following 10 days. A few remaining eggs is not a reason for exclusion.
- Students found to have Head Lice will normally be excluded at the end of the school day, and not earlier, except in circumstances described above for Day 4 and thereafter, or at the discretion of the Principal.
- Teachers to forward all returned correspondence with families to the D/P for record keeping.



# Beverley District High School

John Street Beverley 6304

Telephone 9646 1165

Fax 9646 1441

Dear Parent

At school today, your child was found to have head lice.

Head Lice are tiny insects that live in human hair. They are not caused by poor hygiene and they do not carry disease. Head Lice transfer from child to child when their hair is in close contact, eg while playing or doing schoolwork. For this reason, Head Lice infestation is relatively common in primary school children.

As per our School Head Lice Policy, included with this letter is the Department of Health "Head Lice Fact Sheet" and "How to check hair effectively for head lice" information. This explains how to check for and treat Head Lice. The Department recommends the 10-Day Hair Conditioner Treatment as an inexpensive and effective method. It is also important to use hair conditioner to check **all** members of your household for Head Lice as well. If Head Lice are found, use the 10-Day Hair Conditioner Treatment for all members of the household.

Under the School Education Act (1999), Section 27(2), the School Principal may exclude your child from school until all Head Lice have been removed. A few remaining eggs is not a valid reason for exclusion.

If you have difficulty with screening for, or treating the Head Lice, further advice is available by contacting school, making an appointment to see the School Nurse, or ringing the Public Health Department – Wheatbelt on 9622 4320.

Finally, please complete the section below and send it back to the class teacher when your child returns to school to confirm that you have begun the recommended Head Lice treatment. The Principal has the right to exclude your child until treatment has commenced.

Thank you

Deputy Principal

✂ .....

## CONFIRMATION OF COMMENCEMENT OF HEAD LICE TREATMENT

Child's name: .....

Date treatment commenced ...../...../.....

Treatment used: Hair Conditioner  Chemist medication

Other (please describe): .....

- I understand that Head Lice treatment must continue over a 10-day period.
- I have read the enclosed Department of Health *Head Lice Fact Sheet* OR the '*How to screen effectively for Head Lice*' information overleaf.

Parent's Signature: .....

Date:...../.../....

# HOW TO CHECK HAIR EFFECTIVELY FOR HEAD LICE

## You will need:

- A metal 'nit' comb. Look for one with long, smooth, cylindrical teeth, about 1mm apart. The local chemist will obtain this for you.
- A bottle of inexpensive hair conditioner. Choose one that is not 'runny'.
- Some white tissues or paper towels.
- A magnifying glass (optional).

## What to do:

- Apply **plenty** of hair conditioner to the dry hair until saturated. Comb through with an ordinary comb or brush to remove tangles.
- Section and comb the hair thoroughly with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb in 4 directions – forwards, backwards, left, and right. Continue to section and comb the whole head like this.
- Wipe the comb on a white paper towel, or tissue, as you work and when completely finished examine your findings to check for any adult lice or hatchlings. Hatchlings are young lice that emerge from eggs. You may need to use a magnifying glass and a strong light to see lice or eggs.
- Using white hair conditioner may make it easier to see the Head Lice.
- When combing is completed, rinse the hair conditioner out and dry the hair.

## Why use hair conditioner?

Head Lice move at up to 30 cm per minute – they rapidly run and hide from searching hands and may often be missed. Applying a large amount of hair conditioner to the dry hair 'stuns' the Head Lice and slows them down. They become trapped and may then be easily combed out with the 'nit' comb.

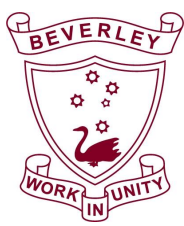
## IF YOU FIND HEAD LICE:

If you find Head Lice in your child's hair, treat by continuing the hair conditioner method daily, for the next 10 days. Read the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* for further details. (Available from the school office, or view online at) [www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice)

You must also check all other household members for Head Lice, using the same hair conditioner method. As well, inform the school and any other close contacts that your child has Head Lice.

NOTE: Other objects in the hair can be mistaken for Head Lice or eggs. If you are unsure of the identity of your findings, use clear sticky tape to fix them to a piece of white paper and continue treatment. You can then ask the Community (School) Nurse or the Environmental Health Officer at your local Council to check if they are Head Lice.





# Beverley District High School

John Street Beverley 6304

Telephone 9646 1165

Fax 9646 1441

Dear Parent

At school today a member of your child's class was found to have Head Lice.

As per our School Head Lice Policy, please examine your child's hair for signs of Head Lice by following the advice overleaf from the Department of Health. Remember that Head Lice are only about 2 to 4 mm long and are often hard to see. They move at up to 30cm per minute and will rapidly run away when the hair is parted to search for them, so a 'dry' hair check is not reliable. Applying hair conditioner to the dry hair slows the Head Lice down, so they can be trapped and removed using a metal 'nit' comb.

The Department of Health's preferred treatment is the *10-Day Hair Conditioner Treatment* (see *overleaf*). Advice on insecticide treatment is also provided in the Department's Head Lice Fact Sheet. Available from the school or online at [www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice).

If Head Lice persist, even after you have carefully followed the Department of Health's instructions, further advice is available from the Deputy Principal, the School Nurse or the Public Health Department - Wheatbelt on 9622 4320.

Finally, please complete and sign the section below and return it to your child's class teacher on the next day they attend school.

Thank you for assisting the school's cooperative approach to Head Lice management.

Deputy Principal

Date:

✂ .....

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**YES** – I have checked my child's hair using hair conditioner according to the Department of Health instructions.

- I found no Head Lice or eggs.
- I found some Head Lice and will continue to treat using the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment
- I found some Head Lice and would like further advice on how to treat them.

**NO** – I have not checked my child's hair because:

.....  
.....  
.....

- I am having difficulty with the hair check and I would like further advice or assistance. Please contact me at this number .....

Parent's signature: ..... Date: .....



# HOW TO CHECK HAIR EFFECTIVELY FOR HEAD LICE

## You will need:

- A metal 'nit' comb. Look for one with long, smooth, cylindrical teeth, about 1mm apart. The local chemist will obtain these for you.
- A bottle of inexpensive hair conditioner. Choose one that is not 'runny'.
- Some white tissues or paper towels.
- A magnifying glass (optional).

## What to do:

- Apply **plenty** of hair conditioner to the dry hair until saturated. Comb through with an ordinary comb or brush to remove tangles.
- Section and comb the hair thoroughly with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb in 4 directions – forwards, backwards, left, and right. Continue to section and comb the whole head like this.
- Wipe the comb on a white paper towel, or tissue, as you work and when completely finished, examine your findings to check for any adult lice or hatchlings. Hatchlings are young lice that emerge from eggs. You may need to use a magnifying glass and a strong light to see lice or eggs.
- Using white hair conditioner may make it easier to see the Head Lice.
- When combing is completed, rinse the hair conditioner out and dry the hair.

## Why use hair conditioner?

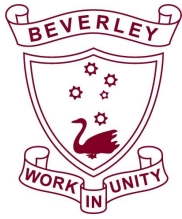
Head lice move at up to 30 cm per minute – they rapidly run and hide from searching hands and can often be missed. Applying a large amount of hair conditioner to the dry hair 'stuns' the Head Lice and slows them down. They become trapped and may then be easily combed out with the 'nit' comb.

## IF YOU FIND HEAD LICE:

If you find Head Lice in your child's hair, treat by continuing the hair conditioner method daily, for the next 10 days. Read the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* for further details. Available from the school office, or view [www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice)

You must also check all other household members for Head Lice, using the same hair conditioner method. As well, inform the school and any other close contacts that your child has Head Lice.

NOTE: Other objects in the hair may be mistaken for Head Lice or eggs. If you are unsure of the identity of your findings, use clear sticky tape to fix them to a piece of white paper and continue treatment. You can then ask the Community (School) Nurse or the Environmental Health Officer at your local Council to check if they are Head Lice.



# Beverley District High School

John Street Beverley 6304

Telephone 9646 1165

Fax 9646 1441

## SYNCHRONISED WEEKEND HEAD LICE HEAD CHECK

Dear Parents

This weekend we are asking all parents in Room \_\_\_\_\_ to undertake a Head Lice check of their child's hair, using hair conditioner and a metal 'nit' comb.

Overleaf is the Public Health Department's advice on how to use hair conditioner to check for Head Lice. Hair conditioner is recommended as it 'stuns' Head Lice, making it easier to trap and remove them when using a 'nit' comb.

Regular, coordinated, weekend Head Lice checks are part of this school's Head Lice Policy program. Checking every student's hair at the same time ensures that any Head Lice infestation is identified early and treated promptly. This helps to prevent Head Lice from becoming an unnecessary and frustrating problem for parents and the school community.

Please complete and sign the section below and return it to your child's class teacher on Monday.

Thank you for being a part of this school's cooperative approach to Head Lice management.

Deputy Principal

Date:

✂.....

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**YES** – I have checked my child's hair using hair conditioner according to the Public Health Department's instructions.

- I found no Head Lice or eggs
- I found some Head Lice and will continue to treat using the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment.
- I found some Head Lice and would like further advice on how to treat them.

**NO** – I have not checked my child's hair because:

.....  
.....

- I am having difficulty with the hair check and I would like further advice or assistance. Please contact me at this number:.....
- Parent's Signature:** .....  
**Date:**.....

# HOW TO CHECK HAIR EFFECTIVELY FOR HEAD LICE

## You will need:

- A metal 'nit' comb. Look for one with long, smooth, cylindrical teeth, about 1mm apart. The local chemist will obtain these for you.
- A bottle of inexpensive hair conditioner. Choose one that is not 'runny'.
- Some white tissues or paper towels.
- A magnifying glass (optional).

## What to do:

- Apply **plenty** of hair conditioner to the dry hair until saturated. Comb through with an ordinary comb or brush to remove tangles.
- Section and comb the hair thoroughly with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb in 4 directions – forwards, backwards, left, and right. Continue to section and comb the whole head like this.
- Wipe the comb on a white paper towel or tissue as you work, and when completely finished, examine your findings to check for any adult lice or hatchlings. Hatchlings are young lice that emerge from eggs. You may need to use a magnifying glass and a strong light to see lice or eggs.
- Using white hair conditioner may make it easier to see the Head Lice.
- When combing is completed, rinse the hair conditioner out and dry the hair.

## Why use hair conditioner?

Head Lice move at up to 30 cm per minute – they rapidly run and hide from searching hands and are often missed. Applying a large amount of hair conditioner to the dry hair 'stuns' the Head Lice and slows them down. They become trapped and are then easily combed out with the 'nit' comb.

## IF YOU FIND HEAD LICE:

If you find Head Lice in your child's hair, treat by continuing the hair conditioner method daily, for the next 10 days. Read the Public Health Department's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* for further details. Available free from the school office, or view [www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice).

You must also check all other household members for Head Lice, using the same hair conditioner method. As well, inform the school and any other close contacts that your child has Head Lice.

NOTE: Other objects in the hair can be mistaken for Head Lice or eggs. If you are unsure of the identity of your findings, use clear sticky tape to fix them to a piece of white paper and continue treatment. You can then ask the Community (School) Nurse or the Environmental Health Officer at your local Council to check if they are Head Lice.

# Head Lice Fact Sheet

## What are Head Lice?

Head Lice are tiny insect parasites that live on the human head, feeding on the scalp several times a day. Head Lice reproduce by laying their eggs (nits) on the hair shaft close to the scalp. They are not dangerous, don't carry diseases and are not a sign of poor hygiene.

## How are Head Lice spread?

Head Lice are spread by head-to-head contact with another person who has Head Lice, eg when doing group work at school, playing, or hugging. Head Lice can run from one head to another in seconds. Head Lice cannot fly, jump or swim, but they can sometimes 'trapeze' from one hair to another. Brushes and combs might transfer Head Lice, but are unlikely to transfer viable eggs, as these are very hard to detach from the hair shaft. Head Lice are not spread through bed linen, clothing or head gear, as they do not leave the scalp unless they are dead or dying. Eggs ('nits') do not fall off until weeks after they have hatched as they are glued tightly to the hair shaft.

## What are the signs of Head Lice?

The scalp may itch as the skin reacts to the saliva of the Head Lice. Itchiness can take weeks to develop. If you have had Head Lice more than once, the skin may become desensitised and there may be little or no itch.

**Crawling Head Lice may be seen** in the hair, but they move at 30 cm per minute and may be difficult to spot. Head Lice can quickly run and hide from searching hands. Adult lice are usually dark brown and about 2 to 3mm long. Hatchlings (young lice) are often a lighter brown and about 1 to 2 mm long.

**Eggs (nits) may be seen** attached to the hair shaft, but they may be very tiny and hard to see, especially newly-laid eggs close to the scalp. They are grey-white and about the size of a grain of salt.

## How do I look for Head Lice?

**To check hair for Head Lice**, carefully comb plenty of hair conditioner through the dry hair, then comb again in sections with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb. The hair conditioner slows the head lice down so they can be trapped in the comb (see page 3). Wipe the combings on a white paper towel and examine them with a magnifying glass in strong light, eg sunlight, to look for Head Lice and eggs.

**To check more effectively for eggs**, use a magnifying glass in strong light, eg sunlight, to examine the hair close to the scalp, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.

## What other things may be mistaken for Head Lice?

Other objects in the hair may be mistaken for head lice or eggs. If you are unsure of the identity of your findings, use clear sticky tape to fix them to a piece of white paper and continue treatment. You may then ask the Community (School) Nurse or the Environmental Health Officer at the Council to check if they are Head Lice or not.

## What do I do if I find Head Lice?

- Check all household members to see if anyone else has Head Lice – use the hair conditioner method from page 3. Only continue with the 10 day treatment if you find Head Lice and/or eggs.
- Choose one of the treatments from pages 3 and 4, and follow the instructions carefully.
- Inform the school, or child care centre, and any other contacts including playgroup, neighbours and relatives, so that other close contacts, both children and adults, can be checked.
- When treatment is completed, with all Head Lice and eggs removed, check the hair regularly, eg weekly, for any further Head Lice infestation. Early treatment can prevent spread to further close contacts.

## How do I treat Head Lice

There are several effective ways to treat Head Lice – these are listed over the page. Choose whichever method best suits you and your family. For successful removal of Head Lice, be sure to follow the directions for your preferred treatment exactly.

# Head Lice Fact Sheet

## Household Cleaning

Head Lice and eggs do not survive long away from the human scalp, as they are human parasites. It is not necessary to wash all the household linen or clothing, to vacuum, scrub or spray the house with insecticide, or to treat the dog or cat. Pillow slips and towels may be soiled with Head Lice debris including droppings and moulted lice skins, so they should be washed on the first day of treatment.

## Exclusion from School

Under the School Education Act 1999, a Principal may exclude a child with Head Lice from school until treatment has commenced. The Public Health Department recommends exclusion at the end of the school day. The child may return to school when all live Head Lice have been removed. A few remaining eggs is not reason for continued exclusion. However, the parent must continue treatment over the following 10 days to ensure that all eggs and hatchlings have been removed.

## Prevention

**Useful activities and ideas to help prevent infestation:**

- **Check your child's hair regularly** for Head Lice and eggs ('nits') – use a fine tooth metal 'nit' comb and plenty of hair conditioner applied to the **dry** hair, to make the task easier and more effective. To help children sit still for this, offer distracting activities, eg play a favourite video, provide games, encourage reading, offer a head massage.
- **Tie long hair back** – braid and/or put it up if possible.
- **Consider applying hair gel or mousse** – these do not prevent or repel lice but may help to keep stray hair strands from contact with other heads.
- **Avoid sharing combs or brushes.**
- **Immerse** brushes and combs in hot water for 10 minutes after use to kill any Head Lice or eggs trapped in them. An old toothbrush will also help remove any debris.
- **Remind your child** to avoid head-to-head contact with other children, eg when working at the computer with others, or when playing, or hugging.

## Repellents

There are no repellents that have been tested and proven to discourage Head Lice. Products including head bands and caps impregnated with insecticide may have some insecticidal effect when Head Lice come in contact with them. However, these products need to be worn all the time and, like all Head Lice insecticides, do not kill all Head Lice eggs. Insecticides may also cause skin irritation.

## 'Trouble-shooting' Checklist

If treatment is unsuccessful, check the following:

- Did the chosen treatment cover the 10 day hatching cycle of the eggs?
- Were the combings examined for adult Head Lice (indicating reinfestation) over the 10 day period?
- Were as many eggs as possible removed every day?
- Was hair conditioner applied to dry hair, not wet?
- Was sufficient hair conditioner applied to saturate the hair?
- Was insecticide (if used), applied exactly as instructed, particularly for the recommended application time?
- Was a fine-toothed metal 'nit' comb used?

## Further Information

Contact your Community (School) Nurse for further assistance – the school office will have a contact phone number.

**If all else fails:** Contact the Public Health Department - Wheatbelt, Western Australia on 9622 4320, or e-mail your enquiry to [headlice@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:headlice@health.wa.gov.au).

This fact sheet is available at [www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice)

# Head Lice Fact Sheet

## 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment for Head Lice

Head Lice may be more easily removed by applying plenty of hair conditioner to dry hair before combing to remove live lice and eggs (nits). Any type of hair conditioner may be used, including generic 'home' brands, together with a fine-toothed metal 'nit' comb. Suitable 'nit' combs may be purchased from most pharmacies.

### How does it work?

The hair conditioner works by immobilising the lice so that it is easier to **trap** them in the teeth of the comb. Without hair conditioner to slow them down, lice may be difficult to catch – they can run about 30 cm in 60 seconds. Hair conditioner also reduces friction, making combing easier, especially when using the fine-toothed metal 'nit' comb. Even if only one or two lice are missed, they can lay about 6 eggs per day, and the cycle of infestation will continue.

### Why the 10-day treatment period?

Generally, eggs ('nits') will hatch 7 to 8 days after being laid on the hair shaft, but some may hatch as late as 10 days after being laid. The 10 day period is therefore recommended as the most effective time needed to break the reproductive cycle of the Head Lice. The reproductive cycle is broken by combing out the emerging hatchlings every one to two days, before they mature enough to lay further eggs (about a week after hatching).

What to do:

- Apply **plenty** of hair conditioner to the **dry** hair until saturated. Using white hair conditioner may make it easier to see the Head Lice.
- Comb through with an ordinary comb or brush to remove tangles.
- Section and comb the hair thoroughly with a fine-toothed metal 'nit' comb in 4 directions — forwards, backwards, left, and right.
- Wipe the comb on a white paper towel to check that the dark adult lice or the paler hatchlings are being removed. Hatchlings are young lice which emerge from eggs. You may need to use a magnifying glass and a strong light to see the lice and eggs.
- Continue combing the hair in sections until the whole head has been screened.
- Rinse the hair conditioner out when finished and dry the hair.
- Repeat this process **every one to two days over** a 10 day period, to cover the hatching cycle of the eggs. Combing with conditioner traps and removes the hatchlings as they emerge from the eggs. To save time during a school week, consider this combing schedule: "Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday".
- Examine your findings for **adult** Head Lice each day after combing. If any are found, this indicates a new infestation. You will need to start again from Day 1, as new eggs may have been laid by the adult lice.
- Check for Head Lice **reinfestation** once a week for at least 4 weeks after completion of the 10-day treatment. Do this on the weekend when you have more time. Applying plenty of hair conditioner makes inspection by combing easier as well as more effective.
- Check all other household members for Head Lice infestation using the method described above.

### How to remove eggs:

Some eggs will be removed by combing, but others are harder to detach. You may need to use your Fingernails to remove as many eggs as possible from the base of the hair shaft near the scalp. Hatchlings that merge from any 'missed' eggs will be removed by combing with hair conditioner over the 10 day period. **Remember**, only those eggs within 1cm of the scalp will hatch. Eggs that have grown further out with the hair shaft will already be hatched or dead.

# Head Lice Fact Sheet

## Insecticide Treatment for Head Lice

There are three groups of insecticide (ie permethrin, pyrethrin and malathion) that have been shown to be effective and safe for the treatment of Head Lice. Some other treatments may not have been properly tested and may be ineffective, expensive or even unsafe. Check the product labels for active ingredients. **WARNING – to avoid adverse reactions the following people should NOT routinely use insecticide**

### Head Lice treatments:

- Babies under 6 months.
- People with asthma, epilepsy, insecticide allergies, scalp conditions or very sensitive skin
- Women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.

**People who cannot use insecticides** should use the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment instead (see previous page).

### Some key points to remember about insecticides:

1. **No insecticide is guaranteed to kill all eggs.** Eggs which are not killed or removed manually will hatch 7 to 10 days after being laid. The hatchlings should be combed out daily using hair conditioner as they may be transferred to other children. Hatchlings will mature after about one week and start laying more eggs, continuing the cycle.
2. **Following insecticide treatment, remove as many remaining eggs as possible with your fingernails.** Use a magnifying glass in strong light, and concentrate on 'live' eggs, which are found within 1 cm of the scalp.
3. **If insecticide alone is used, treatment should be applied on Day 1, Day 7 and Day 14** to kill any hatchlings before they mature and lay more eggs. However, if the hair is combed daily with hair conditioner for 10 days to remove the hatchlings, then the second and third insecticide treatments may be omitted.
4. **To prevent skin irritation,** do not repeat insecticide treatment more than 3 times, one week apart.
5. **Insecticide resistance.** Head Lice that are resistant to an insecticide will still be alive the morning after the insecticide treatment, providing that the insecticide was properly applied. If this happens, then you should thoroughly wash out the first insecticide and re-treat the hair the same day with **another type** of insecticide (ie permethrin, pyrethrin or malathion), not a different brand of the same type of insecticide.

**Alternatively, change to the 10 Day Hair Conditioner treatment instead.**

### How to use insecticide treatment:

- Rinse out any hair conditioner before using the insecticide as it may inactivate the insecticide.
- Lift the hair in sections, and saturate it with insecticide, combing through with an ordinary comb from the scalp to the ends of the hair. Work from the back of the head to the front. Pay particular attention to treating behind the ears, at the nape of the neck and close to the scalp. Leave the insecticide on for the time recommended on the label, then wash out. Section the hair again and comb through with a fine-toothed metal 'nit' comb to remove dead lice and eggs.
- Check that the Head Lice are actually dead. Do this straight after the recommended treatment time and again the next morning. It may take a few hours for all the lice to die. **Remember,** if any Head Lice are found still alive the **next morning,** re-treat the hair the same day with **another type** of insecticide (ie permethrin, pyrethrin or malathion), not a different brand of the same type of insecticide.

**Alternatively, change to the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment.**

- Check all other household members and close contacts for Head Lice infestation using the hair conditioner method from page 3. Only continue with treatment if Head Lice and/or eggs are found.

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# Head Lice Information

## Reports of members of the public using animal flea products to treat Head Lice in children

The Public Health Department has received reports indicating that dog and cat flea treatments are being used by members of the public to treat children with Head Lice. In response to these reports, the Public Health Department is advising parents against this practice and of the potential risk to the health of children if treated with animal flea treatments.

Animal flea treatment products are specifically made for the treatment of dogs and cats and are clearly labelled "For Animal Treatment Only".

The active ingredient in the products of concern is Fipronil. Fipronil is a phenylpyrazole insecticide and acts to block the normal functioning of the central nervous system in insects and also mammals.

Fipronil has been reported as causing eye irritation, skin reactions, nausea and nervous system effects in adults.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), the Commonwealth authority responsible for the registration of pesticide products, is reviewing Fipronil following a number of reports of adverse experiences, such as skin reactions in owners after patting pets treated with Fipronil. The APVMA noted the potential of Fipronil to form toxic photodegradation products. For further information on the APVMA review of Fipronil, see the website located at [www.apvma.gov.au/chemrev/fipronil.shtml](http://www.apvma.gov.au/chemrev/fipronil.shtml)

Flea treatment products for pets are made for animal use only. In Western Australia, use contrary to label directions is an offence under the Health (Pesticides) Regulations. Veterinary medications are not formulated for human use and could cause adverse health effects when applied to humans.

For more information contact the Toxicology Branch of the Environmental Health Directorate on 9388 4932.

## Recommended lice treatment

For further Public Health Department advice on treatments for Head Lice see the website at: <http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/cproot/473/2/Head%20Lice%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

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