



# Head lice

**Head lice** Anyone with hair can get head lice, whatever their age or hair type. The lice feed on blood and their bites cause itching. It can take many weeks after being infected with lice until the itching starts. There is no link between head lice and poor hygiene, and lice cannot be washed out using ordinary shampoos.

## How can one check for head lice?

- Place a white towel over the shoulders of the person who is being checked
- Damp hair hinders the movement of lice
- Systematically comb all the hair using a fine-toothed comb
- Check both the towel and comb for lice and eggs
- Check children regularly for head lice, at least once a month.

## How do I get rid of head lice?

Head lice can be treated using a lice treatment, by combing or by cutting head hair shorter than 0.5cm. If several people in your family or social circle have lice, everyone must be treated at the same time to prevent re-infection.

### Lice treatment

Lice treatments may be applied to the hair and scalp. These contain substances that kill lice. Some lice treatments are more effective than others. Treatments containing the active substances malathion or dimethicone seem to give good results. Products containing permethrin often give poor results because many lice are resistant to this substance in Norway. Substances containing plant oils may have an effect, although few scientific tests have been carried out using them.

Follow the user instructions on the product carefully. Some lice treatments must not be used on young children or pregnant women. Remember that only people with lice should be treated, as there is always a small risk of side effects.

### Combing:

Combing using a lice comb must be done systematically and thoroughly every day for at least eight days, and then once a week for three weeks. The hair should be wet when combing. Place a towel over the shoulders of the person being combed to trap any lice or eggs that drop off. Afterwards, both the towel and comb must be washed at 60°C, or be frozen for at least four hours in order to kill any lice and eggs.



*It is a good idea to split the hair into 3–6 ponytails and comb one ponytail at a time in order to find head lice in long hair.*

PHOTO: LENE SOLBAKKEN



*Lice eggs firmly attached to strands of hair.*

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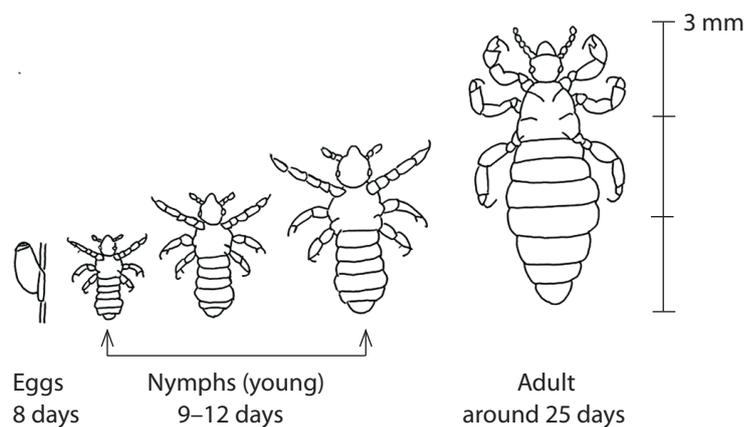
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**How do head lice spread?** Head lice can neither jump nor fly, but crawl from head to head in situations where there is close contact. The likelihood of spreading lice via pillows, furniture, cuddly toys and clothes is extremely small. Nevertheless, borrowing headwear, brushes, combs, hair accessories and other items from someone who has lice is not recommended.

Cases of lice are seldom isolated. Without treatment, families and close friends may infect each other repeatedly

**Lice in kindergartens and in schools** It is not necessary to send a child home if head lice are discovered in their hair at nursery or school. It is likely that the child will have had lice for a long time, and a few hours either way will therefore make little difference. The child may carry on at nursery or school as normal, but should commence a course of treatment for the lice as soon as possible. The child's circle of friends at nursery/school should be informed that a child in the area has head lice, so that everyone can be checked and re-infection is avoided.



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