



HEAD LICE

Head lice, or pediculosis of the scalp, is a phenomenon that affects all environments, all cultures, all regions of the world and all levels of hygiene.

This condition is not dangerous but is very contagious.

As children come into closer contact with each other, lice are more likely to be found on their heads than on those of adults.

➤ What do lice look like?

The louse is a small insect that can grow to between 2 and 4 mm in length and can be difficult to spot. It cannot jump or fly but is easily transmitted from head to head with even brief contact.

More rarely, contamination can occur via contaminated objects (hat, blanket, sheets, hairbrush, etc.)

Lice lay eggs: nits. A louse can lay up to 10 nits per day.

The nits cannot move and are therefore not contagious until they hatch 7-10 days later.

➤ How can they be found?

The presence of lice is most often suspected when the child complains of itching on the scalp or neck, or when there has been contact with an infected person.

In this case, it is necessary to use a lice comb to check for the presence of lice or nits.

➤ What do you need to do if you have lice or nits?

If you find head lice, it is essential that you treat your child and inform anyone who has been in contact with him/her.

The treatment is local and is administered by applying an anti-lice shampoo, sold in pharmacies.

The shampoo should be applied 7 days later to get rid of any nits that may have hatched in the meantime.

It is recommended that you comb for lice every day for 14 days.

Within the same group of children (same class, etc.) it is more effective to treat all children with head lice on the same day to avoid re-infestations.

Ask your pharmacist for advice, especially if the child to be treated is under 2 years old or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

A solution of vinegar and water and mechanical removal by combing is also possible: to be carried out on days 1, 5, 9 and 13 (counting from the beginning of the treatment). Do not hesitate to spend time on it (30 minutes per session).

➤ **Combing method :**

Sit under a good light source.

Wet the child's hair and untangle it, this will make it easier to comb through.

Apply a conditioner generously to the hair.

Separate the hair into thin strands.

Comb the hair strand by strand, always from the head to the tip. Comb in the usual direction of combing, then in the other direction for more effectiveness.

Please note that local treatment is not enough.

➤ **What next?**

To avoid contamination of members of the same household or re-infestation of the same person, it is essential to:

- wash all textiles (clothes, coats, hats, scarves, comforters, sheets, etc.) that have been in contact with lice at 60 degrees. Anything that cannot be washed should be kept in a garbage bag for 10 days (or 24 hours in the freezer)

- vacuum carpets, sofas, etc.

➤ **A few simple steps:**

Tie up long hair at school

Avoid exchanging hats, scarves, coats

Inform contacts when you find lice in your home

Comb for lice regularly

Source: Sciensano and ONE