



HOW TO CHECK HAIR EFFECTIVELY FOR HEAD LICE

You will need:

- A metal 'nit' comb. Look for one with long, smooth, cylindrical teeth, about 1 mm apart. Your local pharmacist should be able to 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 can 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 can 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 free from the school office, or view at <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. These include sand, cat fleas, ants and aphids or other insects, dandruff, and flakes of hair spray. If you are unsure of the identity of your findings, use clear sticky tape to fix them to a piece of white paper. You can then ask the Community (School) Nurse or the Environmental Health Officer at your local Council to check if they are head lice.