

# HEAD LICE

Head lice are tiny insects that live in hair. Nits are the empty egg cases attached to hair that head lice hatch from.

## How to spot head lice

Head lice can be difficult to spot, even when the head is closely inspected. They're very small whitish or grey-brown insects that range from the size of a pinhead to the size of a sesame seed. The only way to be sure someone has head lice is to find a live louse by combing their hair with a special fine-toothed comb. This is called detection combing.



## How are head lice spread

Head lice are spread by direct head to head contact. They climb from one person's hair to another's. Head lice can't fly, jump or swim. Head lice are unlikely to be spread by objects such as hats, combs and pillows. Once detached from the hair, head lice will usually die within 12-24 hours.

## The Importance of Detection combing

Detection combs are special fine-toothed plastic combs that you can bought from pharmacies, or supermarket. A comb with fine tooth spacing of 0.2-0.3mm is best. Detection combing can be carried out on dry or wet hair. Dry combing takes less time, but wet combing is more accurate because the application of conditioner stops head lice moving during the combing process.



## Important points

The only way to be certain that lice are present is to find a live louse. If live louse are found treatment will be required to clear the lice. Close contacts should also be checked for infestation. There's also no need to stay off work/ school or wash clothing on a hot wash.

## Treatment for head lice.

A pharmacist can advise you about the treatments available if you're not sure which is best. Make sure you carefully follow the instructions that come with the treatment you choose. Please contact the Infection Control team if you require any further advice/support on **01744 457 314**