

# Head lice – treatment options

(Provided by Fraser Health at [www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca) – Page 1 of 3)



## HEAD LICE TREATMENT TWO ACCEPTABLE TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Check the heads of all family members for lice and nits as they are easily spread
- Treat all infested family members at the same time otherwise you may not rid your house of lice and the infestation will continue despite the treatments given

<b>OPTION A</b>	<b>OPTION B</b>
<p><b>Head Lice Shampoo</b> (Kill the Head Lice and Remove the Nits)</p> <p>Special head lice shampoos/rinses are used because they have been tested and determined to be a safe and effective treatment.</p>	<p><b>Wet-Combing</b> (Remove the Head Lice)</p> <p>A non-chemical way to find and eliminate head lice.</p>

### **DANGEROUS REMEDIES – DO NOT USE**

The following treatments are either not effective and/or not safe:

Insect Sprays (Raid) Dyes  
 Oil (WD40) Bleaches  
 Gasoline Chinese Chalk  
 Flea Soap Heat Directly on Scalp  
 Alcohol Enzyme Reactions  
 Shaving Gel Kerosene  
 Shaving the Head Garlic

Essential Oils (Pine, Tea Tree, Thyme, Rosemary, Eucalyptus etc....) are not recommended at this time due to limited data and possible toxicity concerns.

# Head lice – treatment options

(Provided by Fraser Health at [www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca) – Page 2 of 3)

## OPTION A: Chemical Shampoo Treatment Kill the Lice and Remove the Nits

This option uses two applications of special lice shampoo to kill the lice on the head, followed by removing the nits from the hair. Some lice products may not be safe for infants or pregnant women. If re-infestation occurs contact your local health unit. **ASK YOUR PHARMACIST ABOUT LICE SHAMPOOS**

### Steps to Follow

Do	Remember
1. <u>Apply Lice Shampoo to dry hair.</u> Treat all infested family members at the same time. <b>READ DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY!</b>	1. Unless you treat all infested family members, head lice can be passed on from one person to another when heads touch.
2. <u>Remove all nits</u> by gently using a metal "nit" comb or use your fingers to pull nits from the single strands of hair.	2. Metal nit combs are available at your local pharmacy. If it tugs the hair, it may be upside down. Place lice/nits in a bowl of hot soapy water. Flush down the toilet when done.
3. <u>If live, active lice are seen 24 to 48 hours after the first treatment</u> , resistance or a heavy infestation should be suspected. Immediate treatment is recommended using a different product, followed by a second treatment seven days later.	3. The medications should be kept out of the reach of young children. These medications cannot be used for infants. Pregnant or nursing mothers should only use head lice medications following advice from their doctor.
4. <u>Apply Lice Shampoo a second time 7 – 10 days</u> after the first shampoo. Repeat step 2.	4. A second shampoo will make sure that any head lice which hatch after the first shampoo will be killed before they have a chance to lay any eggs. Two shampoos and a follow-up head check with nit removal is the best way to make sure head lice are gone.
5. If live head lice or new nits are found, try Option B. Consult a Public Health Nurse if you have any questions.	5. Wet combing breaks the life cycle of head lice by removing them before they are grown and able to reproduce.

### After Treatment Checklist

- Wash in hot water, all bedding, towels and clothes used in the past 2-3 days including those worn during treatment.
- Launder all washable clothing, bedding, and towels in small loads with hot water and/or put in hot dryer for 20 minutes.
- Wash hair brushes, combs and hair accessories (barrettes, ribbons, etc) with hot soapy water.
- Anything that can't be washed (i.e. blankets, coats, headwear, stuffed toys) can be treated by: placing in a closed plastic bag for 10 days or putting in a hot dryer for 20 minutes or putting in the freezer for 48 hours or ironing it.
- There is no evidence that a major cleaning of the house is needed to get rid of head lice. Only items that have been in direct contact with the affected person(s) need to be washed.
- Repeat treatment according to option chosen.
- Notify those in contact with child that lice/nits were found, ie; school, Brownies, Scouts, sports teams, friends.

# Head lice – treatment options

(Provided by Fraser Health at [www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca) – Page 3 of 3)

## OPTION B: Wet Combing Method Remove the Lice

Wet combing is based on the life cycle of lice. It focuses on removing the live lice and does not require removing nits from the head. Combing treatments are done every 3 – 4 days over a two week period – to break the life cycle of the lice by removing them before they are fully grown and able to spread or lay eggs.

This option is safe for infants and pregnant women. Re-infestation can occur – consult your local [health unit](#) if you need more options.

### Steps to Follow

Do	Remember
1. <u>Wash hair</u> with ordinary shampoo and rinse.	1. Note: on average, a wet combing session takes about ½ hour per person
2. <u>Apply ½ cup of conditioner</u> (any brand) all over head and scalp. Do not rinse out the conditioner.	2. Untangle hair with a regular wide toothed comb. Wet conditioner will immobilize the lice.
3. <u>Comb</u> sections of hair using a metal nit comb. Divide the hair into small sections and firmly draw the comb from the scalp to the end of the hair. After each stroke rinse the comb in a sink or bowl of warm water and wipe dry. Do the entire head making sure the head stays very wet.	3. Metal nit combs are available at your local pharmacy. If it tugs the hair it may be upside down.
4. <u>Rinse</u> hair. Leave the hair dripping wet. Repeat step 3 combing <u>without conditioner</u> until no lice are found.	4. Check the comb and your fingernails for lice (you don't want to give them a ride back to your head).
5. <u>Repeat</u> steps 1 – 4 every 3 – 4 days for two weeks (For example, wet comb on day 1, day 5, day 9, day 13)	5. Use a wide tooth comb to untangle and then use the fine tooth metal nit comb again.
6. If you find any lice following treatment, <u>this is a new infestation of lice</u> and you will need to wet comb the hair for another two weeks.	6. This breaks the life cycle of the louse by removing the lice before they are fully grown and able to spread or lay eggs.

### After Treatment Checklist

- Wash in hot water, all bedding, towels and clothes used in the past 2-3 days including those worn during treatment.
- Launder all washable clothing, bedding, and towels in small loads with hot water and/or put in hot dryer for 20 minutes.
- Wash hair brushes, combs and hair accessories (barrettes, ribbons, etc) with hot soapy water.
- Anything that can't be washed (i.e. blankets, coats, headwear, stuffed toys) can be treated by: placing in a closed plastic bag for 10 days or putting in a hot dryer for 20 minutes or putting in the freezer for 48 hours or ironing it.
- There is no evidence that a major cleaning of the house is needed to get rid of head lice. Only items that have been in direct contact with the affected person(s) need to be washed.
- Repeat treatment according to option chosen.
- Notify those in contact with child that lice/nits were found, i.e.; school, Brownies, Scouts, sports teams, friends.