

General Guidelines for Treatment of Head Lice

More information can be found on the Centers for Disease control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>

Treatment for head lice is recommended for persons diagnosed with an active infestation. All household members and other close contacts should be checked; those persons with evidence of an active infestation should be treated. All infested persons (household members and close contacts) and their bedmates should be treated at the same time.

Some medicines that kill live lice also kill eggs. For medicines that are only kill live lice routine retreatment is recommended. For those that kill live lice and eggs retreatment is recommended only if live (crawling) lice are still present several days after treatment (see recommendation for each medication). To be most effective, retreatment should occur after all eggs have hatched but before new eggs are produced.

When treating head lice, supplemental measures can be combined with recommended medicine; however, such additional measures generally are not required to eliminate a head lice infestation. For example, hats, scarves, pillow cases, bedding, clothing, and towels worn or used by the infested person in the 2-day period just before treatment is started can be machine washed and dried using the hot water and hot air cycles because lice and eggs are killed by exposure for 5 minutes to temperatures greater than 53.5°C (128.3°F). Items that cannot be laundered may be dry-cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks. Items such as hats, grooming aids, and towels that come in contact with the hair of an infested person should not be shared. Vacuuming furniture and floors can remove an infested person's hairs that might have viable nits attached.

Treat the infested person(s): Requires using an Over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication. (See your local pharmacist for more information and recommended products). Follow these treatment steps:

1. Before applying treatment, it may be helpful to remove clothing that can become wet or stained during treatment.
2. Apply lice medicine according to the instructions contained in the box or printed on the label. If the infested person has very long hair (longer than shoulder length), it may be necessary to use a second bottle. Pay special attention to instructions on the label or in the box regarding how long the medication should be left on the hair and how it should be washed out.

WARNING: Do not use a combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for 1–2 days after the lice medicine is removed.

- Have the infested person put on clean clothing after treatment.
- If a few live lice are still found 8–12 hours after treatment, but are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. The medicine may take longer to kill all the lice. Comb dead and any remaining live lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit comb.
- If, after 8–12 hours of treatment, no dead lice are found and lice seem as active as before, the medicine may not be working. Do not retreat until speaking with your health care provider; a different lice medicine may be necessary. If your health care provider recommends a different lice medicine carefully follow the treatment instructions contained in the box or printed on the label.
- Nit (head lice egg) combs, often found in lice medicine packages, should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft. Many flea combs made for cats and dogs are also effective.
- After each treatment, checking the hair and combing with a nit comb to remove nits and lice every 2–3 days may decrease the chance of self-reinfestation. Continue to check for 2–3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone. Nit removal is not needed for some products although removal of visible nits can help your child feel more comfortable on return to school.
- Retreatment is meant to kill any surviving hatched lice before they produce new eggs. For some drugs, retreatment is recommended routinely about a week after the first treatment (7–9 days, depending on the drug) and for others only if crawling lice are seen during this period. Retreatment with lindane shampoo is not recommended.
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- ***Supplemental Measures:*** Head lice do not survive long if they fall off a person and cannot feed. You don't need to spend a lot of time or money on housecleaning activities. Follow these steps to help avoid re-infestation by lice that have recently fallen off the hair or crawled onto clothing or furniture.
 1. Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that the infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle. Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned **OR** sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
 2. Soak combs and brushes in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
 3. Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, the risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a rug or carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 1–2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp. Spending much time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to

avoid reinfestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing.

4. Do not use fumigant sprays; they can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

Over-the-counter Medications

Many head lice medications are available "Over-the-counter" without a prescription at a local drug store or pharmacy. See your local pharmacist for the full list of products. Each Over-the-counter product approved by the FDA for the treatment of head lice. If crawling lice are still seen after a full course of treatment contact your health care provider.

When treating head lice

5. Do not use extra amounts of any lice medication unless instructed to do so by your physician and pharmacist. The drugs used to treat lice are insecticides and can be dangerous if they are misused or overused.
6. All the medications listed above should be kept out of the eyes. If they get onto the eyes, they should be immediately flushed away.
7. Do not treat an infested person more than 2–3 times with the same medication if it does not seem to be working. This may be caused by using the medicine incorrectly or by resistance to the medicine. Always seek the advice of your health care provider if this should happen. He/she may recommend an alternative medication.
8. Do not use different head lice drugs at the same time unless instructed to do so by your physician and pharmacist

If the infestation does not resolve or returns, see your health care provider who may prescribe other medication.