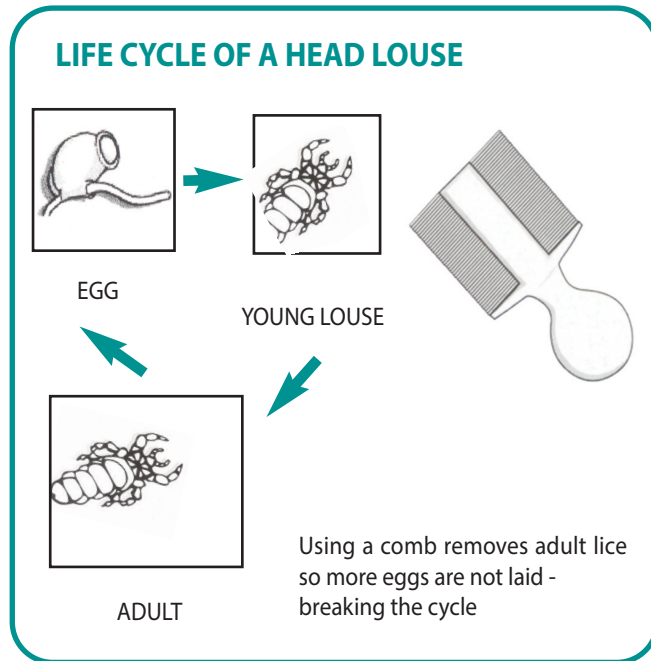


**Early detection and treatment are vital in dealing with head lice.**



Head lice are not a school problem, but can affect anyone in the community. If you find that someone in your family has head lice, you need to check other people in your household. It is important that close contacts are informed, as they may have them and not know.

**For further information and advice please contact:**

**Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Promotion Service**  
01209 313419

**Early Help Hub**  
01872 322277

**NHS Choices**  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Community Hygiene Concern**  
[www.chc.org](http://www.chc.org)



Cornwall Partnership **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Head Lice

## A guide to Detection and Treatment

This leaflet was produced by Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Promotion Service

Please feel free to copy and distribute

# All about Head Lice

Head lice are tiny insects (see actual size pictures below). Their colour can vary according to the hair colour of the person affected.

Actual size in stages of growth of the head louse. 

## Head Lice:

- \* crawl from head to head
- \* cannot fly, hop, swim or jump
- \* are very unlikely to be spread by hair accessories, combs and bedding
- \* don't mind if hair is dirty, clean, short or long
- \* are only caught from people, not animals

## How to find them

The only way to be sure someone has head lice is to find a live louse in the hair.

They are difficult to find in dry hair, but in wet hair they lose their grip, move slowly and can be combed out (detection combing).



## Signs of head lice include:

- \* small white eggs or egg cases (nits) in the hair near the ears or the back of the neck
- \* an itchy scalp
- \* a rash on the back of the neck
- \* feeling of something moving in the hair

## How to get rid of them

If you find head lice, there are two main options to choose from, wet combing and lotions.

### Option 1: Wet Combing

- \* wash the hair, rinse and apply plenty of conditioner
- \* comb through with an ordinary comb to remove tangles
- \* using a fine tooth head lice comb, part the hair into sections
- \* starting at the scalp, comb through to the end of the hair
- \* check the comb for lice each time and remove any by rinsing or wiping the comb
- \* after combing the entire head and no more lice are found, rinse out the conditioner

**Repeat this procedure every 3rd day for two weeks, but you must continue if lice are still being found.**

Wet combing works because it interferes with the life cycle of the head louse. Lice take seven days to grow fully, until this time they are unable to lay eggs or move to another head, so infection will be prevented. The three day follow up removes any newly hatched lice before they become mature. It is important to know that eggs are glued to the hair and cannot be removed by wet combing.

### Option 2: Lotions and Rinses Using Insecticides

- \* please see your local pharmacist who can advise you on products
- \* do not use lotions or rinses unless a living, moving louse is found
- \* treat anyone who is found to have lice at the same time, to prevent re-infection
- \* ensure you have enough product to treat all those affected and follow the instructions on the packet carefully

If the lice appear to be unaffected by the product or the problem persists, then you should take advice from your school nurse, health visitor, pharmacist or GP. These professionals will be able to advise you on alternative treatments.

### Before using lotions and rinses always seek advice when whoever is being treated is:

- \* under one year of age
- \* suffers from asthma or allergies
- \* pregnant
- \* breast feeding