

# Information sheet: treatment of head lice<sup>1</sup>

## Head lice – what's behind them?

- Head lice live only on human heads and feed on human blood
- The female lays about 5 eggs daily, the size of a grain of sand
- The louse glues the eggs to the hair near its root with a water-insoluble glue
- Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene

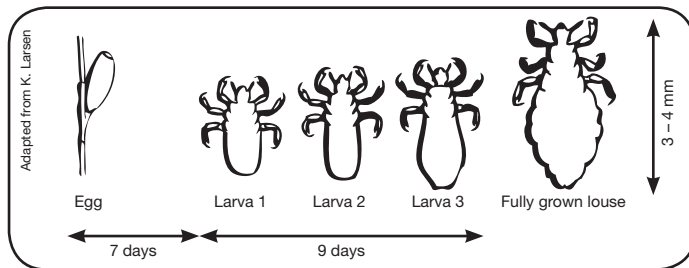


Fig. From an egg to a fully grown head louse

## Where are head lice found?

- Only in scalp hair
- They are spread only by direct hair contact
- Head lice are not spread via objects or animals
- Head lice can neither jump nor fly

## Have I head lice?

- Head lice are hard to identify with the naked eye
- Infestation with head lice is often associated with an itchy scalp
- Head lice are definitely present if you find live head lice
- It is possible that you have head lice if you find eggs/nits<sup>2</sup>
- Check all family members

## How do you find head lice?

1. Wet the hair
2. Spread cream rinse or conditioner generously over the wet hair
3. Comb through the hair (with a brush or comb) to untangle it
4. Comb through the hair strand by strand from the roots to the tips with a fine comb

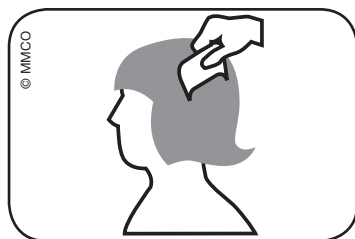


Fig. Combing through wet hair with a fine comb: from the roots to the tips of the hair

5. After each combing, wipe the fine comb on white paper (e.g. kitchen paper) to see the head lice and eggs
6. Rinse hair thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> These recommendations were developed for Switzerland and discussed at a conference of head louse experts in June 2010. They aim to optimise and/or improve the efficacy and success of head louse treatment.

<sup>2</sup> Lice hatch from eggs. The empty egg case is called a «nit».

## Head lice – what now?

- If you have found live lice when checking, you should treat them immediately
- Use a special product against head lice and follow the instructions in the pack.  
If you have any questions or require further information, ask the trained staff in your pharmacy or drugstore.
- If you comb the hair with the fine comb twice a week between the treatments, you can:
  - a) check that the treatment was successful
  - b) halt re-infestation

## Eggs – what now?

- If you have found only eggs and/or nits<sup>2</sup> on checking, you should search the hair for live lice twice a week for 2 weeks
- If you find live head lice, treat them immediately (see «Head lice – what now?»)

### **IMPORTANT!**

- Always inform immediate contacts of a head louse infestation: school, crèche, nursery school, family, friends etc. – this is the only way to stop it from spreading further
- Check all family members for lice with a fine comb once a week
- Place combs, brushes and hair slides in hot soapy water (60° C) for 10 minutes
- Tie long hair together
- Further measures are not necessary, concentrate on the head

Notes / additions:

---

---

---

---

If you have any questions or require further information please contact: