



## HEAD LICE AWARENESS

Head lice are common in BC communities. Although they are a bother, **head lice are not a health risk.**

Head lice spread quickly by close, head-to-head contact. Lice cannot live on furniture or carpet, and they cannot jump or fly. There may be few or no symptoms, but itching may occur.

You can help by:

- ♦ Checking your child's head with the wet combing method of detection once a week throughout the year.
  - ♦ Review the pamphlet *Wet Combing – How to Get Rid of Head Lice*, available online, at your school and Public Health Unit.
- ♦ Encouraging your child to wear their hair tied back.
- ♦ Treating if you notice live lice on your child's head.
- ♦ Reminding family and friends about the importance of routine head checks.

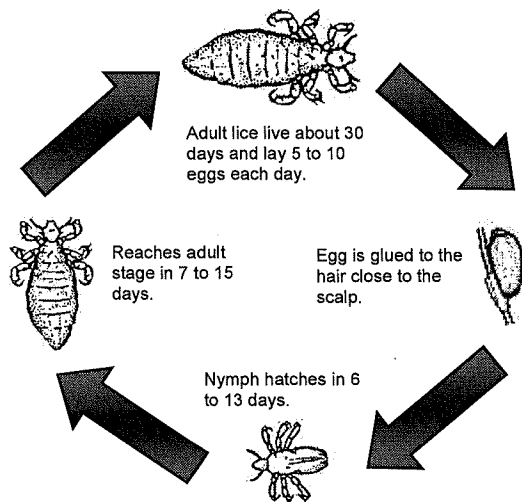
For more information:

- ♦ Read the HealthLink BC File on Head Lice HealthLink BC File #06 Head Lice
- ♦ Contact your local Public Health Unit

# HOW TO GET RID OF HEAD LICE

## WET COMBING

### LIFECYCLE OF THE HEAD LOUSE



### HEAD LICE FACTS

- ◆ Lice are tiny insects about the size of a sesame seed.
- ◆ Anyone with hair can get head lice.
- ◆ Lice do not have wings and cannot fly or jump.
- ◆ Lice move quickly in dry hair and this makes them hard to see.
- ◆ Lice do not live long once they are off the head. They only lay eggs close to the scalp.
- ◆ Having head lice does not always make the scalp itchy.
- ◆ Lice commonly move to other heads when heads touch and rarely by sharing hairbrushes and combs.

- ◆ Lice are common where children play or work closely together.
- ◆ Once a lice egg has hatched, the empty eggshell stays stuck to the hair.
- ◆ If you find an eggshell more than half an inch away from the scalp, it is most likely empty.
- ◆ The eggshells are white and look like dandruff but cannot be brushed or blown away.

### WHEN TO CHECK

- ◆ Regularly ONCE A WEEK after shampooing
- ◆ If your child's playmates have head lice
- ◆ When a family member has head lice
- ◆ When a person is scratching his or her head more than usual

### WHAT YOU NEED

- ◆ Shampoo and white-coloured conditioner (low-priced is fine)
- ◆ Wide-tooth comb to untangle hair
- ◆ Towels and paper towels
- ◆ Lice comb - we recommend a narrow comb with fine teeth and slanted tips, such as a "Bug Busting" comb, that makes it easier to remove lice.
- ◆ Lice combs are available at many Public Health Units and pharmacies.

## HOW TO CHECK FOR LICE



1. Wash and rinse hair.
2. Put enough conditioner on the hair to cover the whole scalp (usually about 2 handfuls).
3. Use a wide-toothed comb to get tangles out.
4. Begin combing the head carefully with the lice comb. While you are combing over the head, **keep the teeth of the comb touching the scalp at all times.**
5. Checking can be done with the head forward over the sink, combing from the back of the head to the front, or from a sitting position going from the front of the head to the back.
6. Pull the comb through the hair in one stroke. If the comb tugs, add more conditioner.
7. After each stroke, wipe the comb on a paper towel and look for lice.
8. Make sure to comb the entire head, checking for lice after each stroke.

**If you find any lice, move onto the treatment process.**

## IF YOU FIND LICE

- ◆ Hats, pillowcases, combs and hairbrushes that have had contact with the head in the previous 2 days could be considered for cleaning in hot soapy water.
- ◆ Clean the supplies that you used for checking for lice in hot soapy water.
- ◆ You **DO NOT** need to spend time cleaning the house.

Use this chart to keep track of the days (shaded areas) that you need to comb and condition.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|

## TREATMENT (IF YOU FIND LICE)

1. With the conditioner still on, pull the comb through the hair in one stroke from the front to the back of the head. Keep the teeth in contact with the scalp for the entire stroke.
2. After each stroke, rinse the comb in warm water. Check the comb for lice before you pull it through the hair again to make sure you do not put lice back onto the head.
3. Keep combing over the entire head until you find no more lice.
4. Rinse the hair to remove conditioner. Leave the hair wet.
5. Untangle the hair with a wide-tooth comb to take out the knots.
6. Comb the whole head again with a lice comb, rinsing the comb after each stroke to make sure there are no more lice.
7. Keep repeating the steps **every 4 days** for a **full two weeks** to make sure that new lice are removed as the eggs hatch.

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|

8. If lice are found on the fourth combing, add one more combing in 4 days.

**For more information, contact your local Health Unit:**

[www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-unit-locations](http://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-unit-locations)