**WHO SHOULD I TELL??**

Contact tracing is a vital part of head lice treatment. If infected individuals are not identified they may pass head lice on to you again very quickly. You need to make a checklist of everybody you have had close head to head contact with and these people need to be told to look for lice. Examples of contacts include grandparents, cousins, best friends, school friends and household and social contacts.



**This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.**

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust, 2 Kings Court, Charles Hasting Way,
Worcester. WR5 1JR.
or by email 💻:
WHCNHS.communications@nhs.net

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Infection Control

# HEAD LICE

***What is it?***

***Your questions answered***

**An Information Leaflet for**

**Patients and Staff**

Head lice are flat greyish-brown insects about the size of a rice grain which live in the hair. They like to stay close to the scalp for warmth and feed by biting the scalp. The female louse lays eggs each night and glues them on to the base of individual hairs.

**HOW DO YOU CATCH THEM?**

Lice are spread from head to head. The lice crawl over from one person to another when heads are touching. They are not usually spread from someone else's clothes, combs. etc.

**ARE THEY JUST A SCHOOL PROBLEM?**

NO. They are far more a family problem. Lice are common in both adults and children. People may have head lice and not know they have. It is important that everyone checks their hair regularly for lice (detection) and if they find them treat them correctly and tell all their contacts (contact tracing).

**WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT HEAD LICE?**

It is everyone's responsibility and if you are a parent you are responsible for control of head lice in your children as well. The best way to control head lice is by detection, treatment and contact tracing.

**WHAT DOES DETECTION OF HEAD LICE INVOLVE?**

Detection involves looking for live lice by combing with a lice detection comb on wet and conditioned hair:

- Part the hair into small sections and comb through with the lice detection comb, from scalp to the ends of the hair, section by section.
- After each stroke wipe the comb on a tissue and check for live lice.
- The whole head needs to be checked. If live lice cannot be found, treatment is not necessary.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF LIVE LICE ARE FOUND?**

If live lice are found, treatment and contact tracing should be undertaken. Currently the recommended treatment is Demeticone 4% lotion (Hedrin) or Malathion (e.g. Derbac M Liquid). <u>The manufacturer's instructions must be carefully followed</u>.

**IS THERE ANY TREATMENT AVAILABLE?**

YES. Head lice may be cleared over a period of 2 weeks by "wet combing". Between 15 and 30 minutes are needed to undertake this procedure and it needs to be repeated every 3 days for 2 weeks:

- Wash hair as normal and rub in some conditioner. Comb with the conditioner still in the hair.
- Divide into sections.
- Put comb into the hair as flat as possible and comb each section of hair down to the ends.
- Do this for every part of the hair.
- After each stroke wash comb under tap to remove lice.
- This needs to be repeated again with the hair kept wet and well conditioned. Lice detection combs can be bought from your local pharmacy.

