



Gelderland-Midden

Headlice

Head lice multiply very fast and they spread easily, especially among children. So check regularly and intervene immediately when you discover lice.

What are head lice and nits?

Head lice are small grey insects, approximately 3 mm in length, almost as big as a match's head. They hide away from light and keep close to the skin of the head. They suck blood on which they live.

The female louse deposits eggs (nits) that stick to the hair, close to the skin. The eggs are grey/white in colour and look like dandruff, but cannot be removed. The eggs hatch after eight or nine days. The young lice mature in eight days, lay eggs and the process comes full circle.

Head lice can cause a terrible itch, especially behind the ears and in the neck: a warm environment.

Only through search lice or nits can be found.

How do you acquire them?

Anybody can be infested by head lice. Lice don't make a difference between clean or dirty heads.

It therefore is not true that lice can only be found with badly groomed people (or very clean people).

Lice do not jump from one person to the other, they walk. Infestation takes place very easily:

through children with their heads close together (80% of the infestation).

Other ways, but less risky:

- through joint use of hairbrush or comb;
- being close together with playing, cuddling etc.;
- in crowded busses, trains or other crowded places – because of heads being close together;
- children are easily infested and are known to infest others with the same ease.

What to do to prevent head lice?

You cannot prevent head lice to wander from one person to the other. You can only prevent them from multiplying themselves. When you know there's head lice around, you have to check your child with a special louse comb (made of metal) for the duration of two weeks.

What methods can be used when infested?

Up to now, there is no such thing as a guaranteed successful treatment. The best way to treat lice is to comb with a special louse comb (metal teeth) for 14 days. You can combine this treatment with using an insecticide but the lice are resistant for many insecticide.

What to do?

Buy louse comb with metal teeth at the pharmacy.

Comb hair daily with the louse comb for the duration of two weeks.

Combing with a louse comb

- Wet the hair with water or with a mixture of half water, half vinegar (don't do this when the skin is damaged because of the itching!) or use a hair conditioner: this simplifies the combing.
- Comb hair thoroughly above a wash-hand basin: you can flush the lice.
- START DIRECTLY AT THE SKIN: if you comb in the normal way (how you normally comb your hair) you will comb over the lice and you will not remove them.
- Nits glue to hair. It's not possible to comb them away. You can try removing them with your nails or cut the hair to which the nits stick. Remember that nits that are 1,5cm/1inch away from the skin, the nit is empty and no danger.
- After every treatment, clean the comb properly by boiling it into water for at least 5 minutes or by disinfecting it with alcohol (70%)



Bron: RIVM Nederland

If you want to use an insecticide or other treatment:

Never use an insecticide or other treatment when no lice are found (there is no prevention possible)!

- Buy a treatment that contains 'dimethicon' (without insecticide) (e.g.: XTLuis, Nyda) or an insecticide at the pharmacy (e.g.: Prioderm, Noury, Loxazol).
- Read the instructions for use and follow the instructions carefully.
- Repeat the treatment after one week, even if this is not mentioned in the insert.
- Comb hair daily with a louse comb for the duration of two weeks.
- ALWAYS combine this treatment with combing the hair for 2 weeks (louse comb with metal teeth).
- The treatments that contain 'dimeticon', e.g. "XTLuis, Nyda". Treatments with dimeticon do not contain an insecticide, this treatment chokes the lice. Lice can't become resistant for dimeticon.
- Treatments with lavender-oil and/or tea tree oil don't work and can cause harm to the body of the child (headaches, possible changes in the body/growth).

Never use an insecticide more than 2 times a year. The insecticide will enter the body of the child through the skin and can do harm when being used often or a long time.

Important

- Malathion and dimethicon are flammable: when used, don't blow the hair dry and don't smoke near treated hair.
- Chlorine disables the working of malathion. When used, don't let the child go to a swimming pool (swimming lessons!) on the day of treatment.
- Don't treat pregnant women and infants with insecticide: only comb.
- Make sure to treat all family members with head lice simultaneously! Also parents, teacher, and other adults can get lice!
- Provide every family member with his/her own hairbrush or comb. Long hair should be put up or worn in a ponytail.
- Inform your child's teacher
- Notify the parents of friends and other children your child frequently plays with. Think about sport clubs too.

- Keep checking, even when no head lice prevails.
- Remember that lice lives on heads. Don't give too much attention to cleaning the house without the right way of combing the head.

New policy, since 16-03-2011:

Cleaning the house, washing clothes and toys, boiling hairbrushes, vacuuming the car, using special bags for coats at school... Untill now parents were advised to do all this to prevent headlice from coming back. But it has never been (scientifically) proven to be effective. Therefore this is not advised anymore!

For futher information about this policy: www.rivm.nl & www.landelijksteunpunthoofd Luis.nl (in Dutch)

Keep checking!

Some children are (very) contagious for headlice. Check all heads in your family (also parents!) once a week. By doing so, you catch a infection quickly and it's more manageable.

More information?

Still having questions or want more advice? Please contact GGD Gelderland Midden, see below.