

10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment for Head Lice

Head lice can be more easily removed by applying plenty of hair conditioner to dry hair before combing to remove live lice and eggs (nits). Any type of hair conditioner may be used, including generic 'home' brands, together with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb. Suitable 'nit' combs can be purchased from most pharmacies.

How does it work?

The hair conditioner works by immobilizing the lice so that it is easier to **trap** them in the teeth of the comb. Without hair conditioner to slow them down, lice can be difficult to catch – they can run about 30 cm in 60seconds. Hair conditioner also reduces friction, making combing easier, especially when using the metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb.

Why the 10 day treatment period?

Generally, eggs ('nits') will hatch 7 to 10 days after being laid on the hair shaft. The 10 day period is therefore recommended as the most effective time needed to break the reproductive cycle of the head lice .The reproductive cycle is broken by combing out the emerging hatchlings every one to two days, before they mature enough to lay further eggs (about a week after hatching).

What to do:

- Apply **plenty** of hair conditioner to the **dry** hair until saturated. Using white hair conditioner may make it easier to see the head lice.
- Comb through with an ordinary comb or brush to remove tangles.
- Section and comb the hair thoroughly with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb in 4 directions — forwards, backwards, left, and right.
- Wipe the comb on a white paper towel to check that the dark adult lice or the paler hatchlings are being removed. Hatchlings are young lice which emerge from eggs. You may need to use a magnifying glass and a strong light to see the lice and eggs.
- Continue combing the hair in sections until the whole head has been screened.
- Rinse the hair conditioner out when finished and dry the hair.
- Repeat this process **every one to two days over** a 10 day period, to cover the hatching cycle of the eggs. Combing with conditioner traps and removes the hatchlings as they emerge from the eggs.
- Examine your findings for **adult** head lice each day after combing. If any are found, this indicates a new infestation. You will need to start again from Day 1, as new eggs may have been laid by the adult lice.
- Check for head lice **reinfestation** once a week for at least 4 weeks after completion of the 10-daytreatment. Do this on the weekend when you have more time. Applying plenty of hair conditioner makes inspection by combing easier as well as more effective.
- Check all other household members for head lice infestation using the method described above.

How to remove eggs:

Some eggs will be removed by combing, but others are harder to detach. You may need to use your fingernails to remove as many eggs as possible from the base of the hair shaft near the scalp. Hatchlings that merge from any 'missed' eggs will be removed by combing with hair conditioner over the 10 day period

Insecticide Treatment for Head Lice

WARNING – to avoid adverse reactions the following people should NOT routinely use insecticide head lice treatments:

- babies under 6 months
- people with asthma, epilepsy, insecticide allergies, scalp conditions or very sensitive skin
- women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.

People who cannot use insecticides should use the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment instead (see previous page).

Some key points to remember about insecticides:

1. No insecticide is guaranteed to kill all eggs. Eggs which are not killed or removed manually will hatch 7 to 10 days after being laid. The hatchlings should be combed out daily using hair conditioner as they may be transferred to other children. Hatchlings will mature after about one week and start laying more eggs, continuing the cycle.

2. Following insecticide treatment, remove as many remaining eggs as possible with your fingernails.

Use a magnifying glass in strong light, and concentrate on 'live' eggs, which are found within 1 cm of the scalp.

3. If insecticide alone is used, treatment should be applied on Day 1, Day 7 and Day 14 to

kill any hatchlings before they mature and lay more eggs.

5. Insecticide resistance. Head lice that are resistant to an insecticide will still be alive the morning after the insecticide treatment, if the insecticide was properly applied. If this happens, thoroughly wash out the first insecticide and re-treat the hair the same day with **another type** of insecticide(i.e. permethrin, pyrethrin or malathion), not a different brand of the same type of insecticide.

Alternatively, change to the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment instead.

How to use insecticide treatment:

- Rinse out any hair conditioner before using the insecticide as it may inactivate the insecticide.
- Lift the hair in sections, and saturate it with insecticide, combing through with an ordinary comb from the scalp to the ends of the hair. Work from the back of the head to the front. Pay particular attention to treating behind the ears, at the nape of the neck and close to the scalp. Leave the insecticide on for the time recommended on the label, then wash out. Section the hair again and comb through with a metal fine tooth 'nit' comb to remove dead lice and eggs.
- Check that the head lice are actually dead. Do this straight after the recommended treatment time and again the next morning. It may take a few hours for all the lice to die. **Remember**, if any head lice are found still alive the **next morning**, re-treat the hair the same day with **another type** of insecticide (i.e. permethrin, pyrethrin or malathion), not a different brand of the same type of insecticide.