

### Electric Comb

Electric battery operated combs are to be used on dry hair. These are claimed to stun or kill the headlice so they let go of the hair and can be combed out. Clean the teeth after each stroke of the comb. Electric combs should be used on alternate days for two or three weeks to break the breeding cycle. People with epilepsy should not use them.

### Chemical Treatments

The use of any chemical in or on the body carries risk. Chemicals can be expensive, however some chemical treatments can be obtained by prescription. Apply the treatment strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Comb the hair carefully to remove as many dead or live headlice and eggs as possible. Check *all* members of the household daily for a period of three weeks.

### Herbal remedies

Several herbal preparations are available, however the effectiveness of these is not clearly established. Most herbal remedies might be regarded as expensive conditioners that are no more effective than other conditioners. Some, such as tea tree oil, may be, volume for volume, more toxic to humans than chemical preparations. Olive oil, hair gel and mayonnaise may make combing easier.

### Other precautions

Extra precautions may include washing all bed linen and certainly pillowcases and towels in hot water (at least 60 degrees centigrade) and tumble drying for 20 minutes on high. Other items that have come in contact with heads should also be thoroughly cleaned. Soak hairbrushes and combs in hot water for at least ten minutes. Vacuuming carpets and rugs may also be helpful, if only to ensure that dead nits and lice are collected and not left to reappear on the heads or clothing.



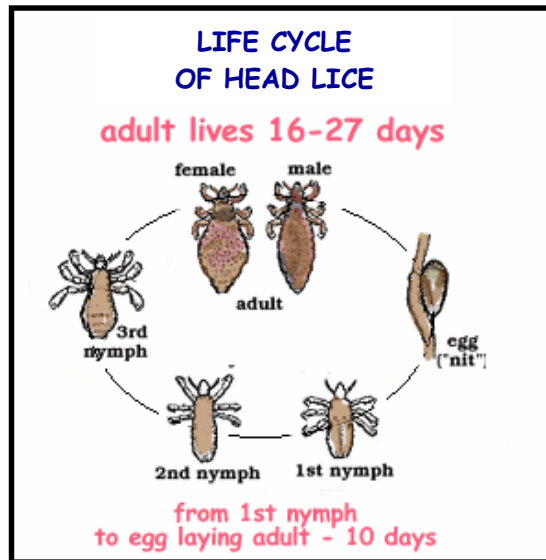
## Summary

Headlice is a community problem that needs to be controlled by the whole community. If one family fails to check and treat a child's head, the work done by others to control the problem is likely to be in vain. It is a parent's responsibility to check and treat their children regularly.

There are a variety of treatments available to families ranging in cost from very cheap to very expensive. How much a treatment costs is no measure of its effectiveness. There is evidence to suggest that systematic and regular physical treatment can markedly reduce the risk and severity of infestation.

Any family can host headlice. All families can detect and treat an infestation.

Thank you for doing your part to keep Wakari School a safe place for our children!



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# Wakari School

# HEAD LICE



## A Guide for Parents

- What you need to know
- What to look for
- Steps to prevent head lice
- How to treat head lice

## Myths about Head Lice

**“Headlice can jump or swim from person to person”**

*Headlice have legs designed for climbing so need to be able to crawl from person to person in close proximity. Headlice cannot swim*

**“Only dirty people have headlice”**

*Headlice feed on blood, not dirt. Anyone can host headlice*

**“Children get headlice from classroom carpets or animals”**

*Headlice only live on human heads*

**“Headlice prefer certain blood types”**

*Headlice like to feed on any blood*

**“People with dark-coloured hair get headlice more than other people”**

*It is easier to see the yellow-white nits in dark hair so dark-haired people are possibly able to manage the problem more easily. People with light-coloured hair may find it is easier to manage the brown headlice. Headlice like hosts with hair of any colour*

## Facts about Head Lice

### What to look for

Headlice are small insects approximately 2 to 4 mm long and about 1mm wide. They have six legs with claws and are usually a light or dark brown colour.

Eggs (nits) are small and hard like a grain of salt and are yellow-white in colour. Eggs are usually found on the hair very close to the scalp. Those found further from the scalp (1 to 1½ cm from the scalp are probably dead or hatched).

Sometimes a person with headlice or eggs might feel itchy, but not always.

### Checking for headlice or eggs

Check weekly using bright light and by parting the hair. Check the scalp, especially at the front, nape of the neck, behind the ears and at the base of a pony tail or plaits.

Small red dots behind the ears and on the nape of the neck may be headlice bites. Eggs are usually easier to see than headlice. Don't be confused by dandruff that is flaky and easily removed. Eggs will feel sandy or gritty when fingers are run through the hair.

### Transmission

Headlice crawl from head to head. Because young children are often in close proximity to one another in play or classwork, or in close proximity to family adults at home, headlice have opportunities to move from one head to another. It is impossible to know the origin of an outbreak.

A less likely method of transmission is through the sharing of things like combs, hairbrushes, hats, and other things that touch the head and hair.

Because headlice need food, humidity and warmth to survive it is unlikely they will be found alive on car seats, curtains or carpets.

Adolescents and adults tend to spend little time in close proximity to others so transmission of headlice amongst older people is less likely than amongst the young.

### Temperature and Humidity

Headlice and the eggs (nits) enjoy warmth. Between 28 and 32 degrees centigrade makes the human head an ideal place for headlice to live. Humidity needs to be about 75% in order for eggs (nits) to hatch.

### Food

Blood is the food of headlice. Headlice need something to cling to and to lay their eggs on. Headlice find a head of hair a most suitable place to live.

### Hosting headlice

Headlice do not cause disease. They may cause an uncomfortable itching. At worst, a child with headlice may scratch excessively and break the scalp possibly allowing infection in. An infestation of headlice should be detected and dealt with long before it becomes either highly visible or irritating.

Headlice are not new. Headlice and the eggs (nits) have been with us for centuries. Egyptian mummies over 3000 years old have been found with the remains of headlice.

## Preventing Headlice

- Avoid head to head contact.
- Don't share brushes, combs, hats and other items that come into contact with hair.
- Discourage children from playing with each others' hair.
- Tie long hair back or plait it.
- Brush hair regularly.
- Check the hair of everyone in the family at least once a week.
- Take action if a child is scratching unusually - check their head carefully.

## Treatment

Ideally, once headlice are detected in the school, the whole school community should take action at the same time and over a period of weeks. One untreated head in a community can ensure an outbreak continues for months.

Treatment must be thorough, regular and carried out over a period of weeks by everyone. Even so, such treatment will not prevent a reinfestation originating from another community. Keeping headlice under control requires constant vigilance. Effective treatment can be cheap. A combination of methods is likely to be most successful.

### Dry Combing

Some combs will extract adult headlice only and leave the eggs; the closer together the teeth of the comb are, the more successful combing will be.

### Wet Combing

This method, using any kind of hair conditioner, is for detection and removal of headlice and eggs. It is recommended that this treatment be repeated on alternate days for three weeks. The idea is to smother the headlice with conditioner (up to 20 min), preventing them from moving away, and to allow manual removal. Do not use conditioner within a day of using a chemical treatment; it will make the chemical treatment ineffective.