



## How to Detect Head Lice

Head lice will only survive two to four days away from the scalp at normal room temperature. Nits (lice eggs) will not hatch if they are away from the scalp, as they need the scalp's temperature to hatch.

To determine if there is a case of head lice, a living louse (parasite) needs to be found on the head.

### To detect lice, you will need the following:

- plastic or metal nit comb (fine tooth comb)
- regular comb
- towel
- tissue or paper towel
- plastic bag
- white-coloured hair conditioner
- old toothbrush
- rubbing alcohol
- hot water
- magnifying glass
- well-lit room
- hair clips

### Procedure:

1. Check for lice in a well-lit room.
2. Wash the hair well and towel dry.
3. Place a dry towel on the shoulders.
4. Cover hair in white conditioner.
5. Comb the hair with a regular comb.
6. Use a nit comb (fine tooth comb) to comb from the top of the head to the ends of the hair with the teeth of the comb touching the scalp. Search the entire head. The most common areas where nits are found are around the ears and the nape of the neck.
7. After each stroke, check the teeth of the comb carefully for lice or nits, then wipe the comb with a tissue and discard it in garbage bag. Use a magnifying glass as the nits are tiny.
8. Use hair clips to pin up hair once an area has been combed five times.
9. A complete combing of a head will take 15 to 20 minutes.
10. If live lice are found, then treatment will be required. Wash the hair to remove the conditioner before beginning the treatment. Pesticide-free options are available.
11. Tie up garbage bags and discard.
12. Clean teeth of combs with an old toothbrush. Wash combs, brushes or anything used to search the head with soap and water, then soak these items in rubbing alcohol, Lysol®, or hot water for 10 minutes.

Adult lice are the size of a sesame seed and are capable of changing their colour to match their surroundings. Newly hatched lice called nymphs are about the size of a pin head and may be clear coloured or red, depending on when they last ate. The nits are very small and silver-gray in colour and stick to the shaft of the hair close to the scalp.

*Adapted from Nova Scotia Public Health Services and UK Health Protection Agency*