

Wet Combing Treatment for Head Lice

Wet combing treatment (often called 'bug-busting') is a way of removing head lice from the head without using anti-lice lotions or sprays to kill them.

How do you do wet combing treatment?

You need a special 'detection comb'. (The teeth of normal combs are too far apart.) Some pharmacies stock the combs which you can buy, and you can also get them on prescription. You can also get them by mail order in a special kit with instructions from Community Hygiene Concern (details at end of leaflet). Only one kit is needed for a family. It is washable and reusable.

- Wash the hair in the normal way with ordinary shampoo.
- Rinse out the shampoo and put on lots of ordinary conditioner.
- Comb the hair with a normal comb to get rid of tangles.
- When the hair is untangled switch to the detection comb.
- Slot the teeth of the detection comb into the hair at the roots so it is touching the scalp.
- Draw the detection comb through to the tips of the hair.
- Make sure that all parts of the hair are combed by working around the head.
- Check the comb for lice after each stroke. A magnifying glass may help.
- If you see any lice, clean the comb by wiping it on a tissue, or rinse it before the next stroke.
- After you have combed the whole head, rinse out the conditioner.

It takes up to an hour to do a wet combing session properly. And then you need to do the same **at least** four times, every four days. The number of sessions required depends on the last time you see lice.

- The first combing session should remove all hatched head lice, but does not remove eggs. Therefore lice that hatch from eggs after the first session may still be present.
- Subsequent sessions clear newly hatched lice. Keep doing the combing sessions every four days until you have had three sessions where no lice are detected.
- Once you have had three sessions where you do not see any lice, it usually means that you are then free of lice.

What about family and friends?

All people in the same home, and other close 'head-to-head' contacts of the previous 4-6 weeks should be contacted. Tell them to look for lice and treat if necessary. (It used to be advised to treat all close contacts even if they had no symptoms. This has changed to just treating people who have head lice.) All people with head lice in the same home should be treated at the same time. This stops lice being passed around again.

Further information

You can get further details of wet combing treatment from:
Community Hygiene Concern Tel: 01908 561928 Web: www.nits.net

References

- [Head lice](#), Clinical Knowledge Summaries (March 2010)
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Comprehensive patient resources are available at www.patient.co.uk

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