

# Head Lice – advice from the Department of Health

Head lice are common; particularly in primary school aged children, who tend to frequently put their heads together with other children. The only way to be sure someone has head lice is by finding live lice or eggs, therefore early identification and treatment of head lice will minimise their spread. We would recommend that children of primary school aged should have their heads checked for head lice at least weekly, especially if their friends and classmates are known to be infected.

Parents and carers can do this by combing their hair with a special fine-toothed comb (detection comb). **Please be aware that GP's will not prescribe head lice combs.** The combs can be purchased online or at pharmacies, with the plastic combs costing approximately £1 - £2, metal versions of the combs can also be purchased.

Head lice should be treated if they are found and everyone in the house should be checked and treated on the same day if they are found to have head lice.

There's no need to keep children off school if they have head lice or to wash laundry on a hot wash. Parents can use medicated lotions and sprays that kill head lice in all types of hair which can be purchased from pharmacies, supermarkets or online (these products usually come with a comb). The specific directions on the product should be followed and head lice should die within a day.

Parents that do not wish to use lotions can use the fine-toothed comb (detection comb) to remove head lice using a conditioner will help the detection and removal. Hair should be combed in sections from roots to tip ensuring all areas are combed, and this should be repeated every few days for 2 weeks.

There's nothing you can do to prevent head lice. However by sharing the Department of Health advice with parents and carers we can try to limit the spread.