

Managing Head Lice at Home Package



A Health
Promoting Schools
approach to
managing head lice



Queensland Government

Queensland Health
Education Queensland



Dear Parent

We are a 'Health Promoting School' which means we value the physical and emotional health of everyone in our school community. When we deal with a particular issue (such as head lice), we consider:

- the need for accurate information and support to decrease any myths or blame;
- the importance of feeling good about ourselves and others;
- the need for everyone to work together.

Detecting and treating head lice is the responsibility of families. Our school supports families in that role in a number of ways as demonstrated in the enclosed *Managing head lice at home* package.

Please refer to the package as needed and contact the school administration if you have any further questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely

School Principal

Managing head lice at home package

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Our school supports you in managing head lice at home by:

- providing the *Managing head lice at home* package to all families;
- reducing head-to-head contact between **all** students in class activities when we are notified that someone in the class may have head lice (individual students are not identified as having head lice);
- recommending that students tie back long hair to reduce the chance of transmission;
- teaching children about head lice in class lessons;
- keeping families informed. When we are notified that there are a number of children with head lice in your child's class, you will receive an *alert notice* with a tear off slip. **Help us to help you** by returning your slip;
- providing information through our school newsletter.
- having our head lice support volunteer available to help you with enquiries over the phone and/or at school. Please contact

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

- offering my support as the school principal. Support is also available from the school health nurse, community participation officer and Parents and Citizen's Association. Please contact the school office for details.

What happens if your child gets head lice?

- DON'T PANIC – anyone can get head lice and help is available.
- Begin treatment immediately and check for effectiveness. (For more information see *Treatment*).
- Send your child back to school as soon as **effective treatment** has commenced. Your child is **not a risk** to others as long as treatment has commenced.
- Complete a *notification form* (included in this package) and return it to school with your child. It is most likely that others in the class also have head lice. We can then advise all families to check every 2 days (and treat if head lice are found). This decreases the chance of your child getting head lice back again.



I found head lice on my child. I began the conditioner and combing treatment straight away. I sent him to school the next day with a notification form for his teacher. He still had some eggs left but that's okay because I will keep doing the conditioner and combing treatment to remove the young lice as the eggs hatch.

How can you be supported in managing head lice?



Notification Form

If your child has head lice it is likely that other children in the class will have them too. By notifying us when your child has head lice, we can advise the parents of all children in the class to check (and treat if head lice are found). This will decrease the chance of your child getting head lice back again. We do **not** give out the names of children who return notification forms and/or have head lice.



I would like to notify that I have found head lice on my child _____
in class

(Please tick the boxes below as appropriate)

- I have ☐ commenced conditioner and combing treatment
☐ commenced a chemical treatment
☐ not commenced treatment
- I am ☐ managing the head lice at this stage
☐ having some difficulties managing the head lice at the moment
- ☐ I would like a follow up phone call from the school head lice support volunteer or school principal

Signature of parent/carers _____ Date / /

Please contact the school if you require more copies of this notification form.



Notification Form

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I would like to notify that I have found head lice on my child _____
in class

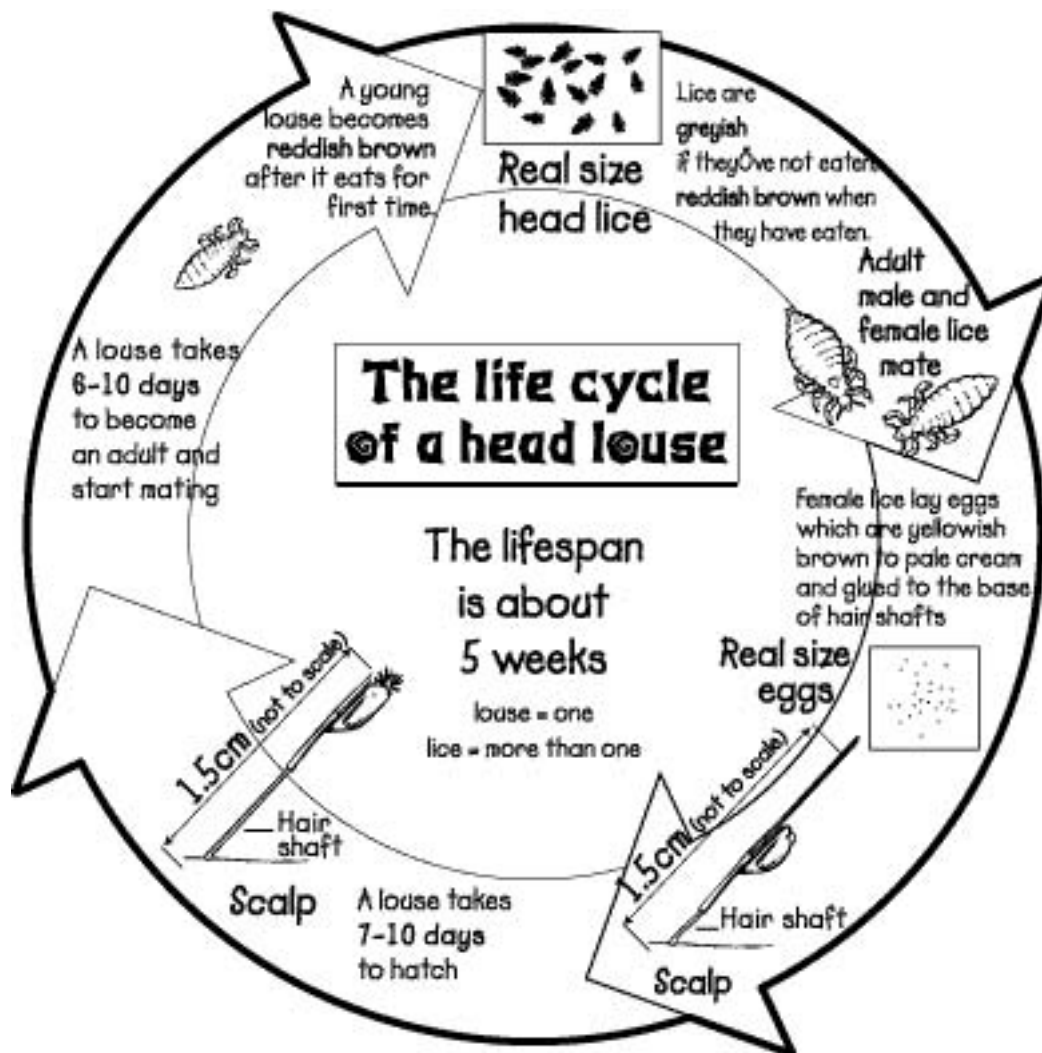
(Please tick the boxes below as appropriate)

- I have ☐ commenced conditioner and combing treatment
☐ commenced a chemical treatment
☐ not commenced treatment
- I am ☐ managing the head lice at this stage
☐ having some difficulties managing the head lice at the moment
- ☐ I would like a follow up phone call from the school head lice support volunteer or school principal

Signature of parent/carers _____ Date / /

Please contact the school if you require more copies of this notification form.

Head lice: the facts



Some facts about head lice:

- Head lice are tiny insects. They do not have wings, so they **cannot fly**. Head lice have strong claws and swing from hair to hair – they **cannot jump**.
- Head lice can only survive on **human heads**. They live on the hair and suck blood from the scalp. Head lice must feed every six hours or they will die from dehydration.
- Head lice can only be spread from one person to another by direct head-to-head contact.
- The female louse lays five to 12 eggs per day (up to 300 in her life time). Eggs remain strongly glued to the hair, even after hatching. Eggs are sometimes called nits.
- Live eggs need the warmth and moisture of the scalp to hatch and will be found up to 1.5cm from the scalp.
- Eggs that are further than 1.5cm from the scalp are either dead or hatched and do not require further treatment.
- At any one time, it is possible to have adult head lice, young lice and eggs.
- Anyone can get head lice – they have no preferences for cleanliness, hair colour, hair type, ethnicity or age.
- Only the insects (adults and young lice) can move from one head to another. Eggs cannot spread.
- Dandruff and hair particles can be mistaken for eggs.
- Head lice are a nuisance but they do **not** cause disease or illness.

Detection (finding the head lice)

Itching is often the first thing that raises concern about head lice, however it is not a reliable sign of head lice.

Why check for head lice?

You can have head lice and not know. Lice move fast in dry hair and are easy to miss. Itching is not a reliable sign. Most children who itch **do not** have head lice. If you find head lice early, they are easier to treat.

Who should be checked for head lice?

Everyone in the family - adults and children.

When to check for head lice?

Check everyone once a week. If a close contact has head lice, keep checking every 2 days until no lice are found for 10 consecutive days.

How to check for head lice?

Using hair conditioner and combing is the most effective way of finding head lice. Conditioner and combing can be used for detection and/or treatment. (For more information see *Conditioner and combing: a technique for detection and/or treatment of head lice*).

What exactly am I looking for?

Adult and young head lice.

About the eggs ...

- Eggs will be glued to the hair. Those found within 1.5cm from the scalp mean an active condition. They will hatch and will need to be treated. If you find only eggs more than 1.5cm from the scalp and no adult or young lice, the condition is inactive and does not require treatment.

About head lice combs ...

- Head lice combs are very fine toothed, made from plastic or metal and are designed to remove head lice. Some combs also remove some eggs.
- There are different types available: plastic, metal and electronic. Metal head lice combs with cylindrical teeth remove head lice and eggs better than combs with flat teeth. (For more information see – *Choosing a head lice comb*)

Tips:

- Checking for head lice is easier to remember if you do it on the same day each week.
- Use the *head lice record* in this package to help you track the detection and treatment of head lice. If you need more copies of the record, contact the school.

We found head lice. As our children play together, you may like to check your child.



Conditioner and combing : a technique for the detection and/or treatment of head lice

- Conditioner and combing is the **most effective** way of finding head lice.
- Conditioner and combing is also an effective way of treating head lice, particularly mild conditions.
- The conditioner stuns the lice for some minutes so they can be easily removed.
- Conditioner and combing is cheap. It also avoids the use of head lice chemicals (insecticides).
- Conditioner and combing is easy for older children to learn to do for themselves.
- Using conditioner and combing every two days between chemical treatments removes young lice as they hatch from the eggs. No insecticide will kill the eggs.

For conditioner and combing you will need:

- white hair conditioner
- an ordinary comb
- a fine tooth comb
- hair clips
- white tissues or material
- good light
- a magnifying glass
- a mirror if combing yourself
- a plastic container
- an old toothbrush, safety pin or dental floss



Conditioner and combing detection

1. Untangle dry hair with an ordinary comb.
2. Apply hair conditioner to **dry hair**. Use enough conditioner to thoroughly cover the whole scalp and all hair from the roots to tips.
3. Use the ordinary comb to evenly distribute conditioner and divide the hair into four or more sections using the hair clips. A mirror helps if combing yourself.
4. Change to a head lice comb.
5. Start with a section at the back of the head. Place the teeth of the head lice comb flat against the scalp. Comb the hair from the roots through to the tips.
6. Wipe the comb on the tissue or material after each stroke. In good light, check for head lice. Adult lice are easier to see – young lice are difficult to see. A magnifying glass will help. You may see some eggs.
7. Comb each section twice until you have combed the whole head. If the comb becomes clogged, use the old toothbrush, dental floss or safety pin to remove the head lice or eggs.

If you find head lice, decide on a treatment option.

If you choose the conditioner and combing as a treatment, see box below.

If you choose a chemical treatment, wash the conditioner off and allow the hair to dry before applying a chemical treatment. Follow the instructions in *Treatment*.

Conditioner and combing treatment

1. Follow all steps in box above.
2. Keep combing the whole head until all the hair conditioner is gone.
3. Repeat the conditioner and combing every 2 days until you find no more head lice for 10 consecutive days. You will be removing all the adult lice and any young lice that hatch from the eggs.

Cleaning up after conditioner and combing detection and/or treatment

1. Place all tissues or material in a plastic bag, tie the top and put it in the bin.
2. Wash hair normally.
3. Soak combs in soapy hot water (just after boiling) for at least 30 seconds to ensure head lice are killed (this should be done by an adult). When the water has cooled, use an old toothbrush to remove the debris.



Head lice combs are fine toothed, made from plastic or metal and are designed to remove head lice (not necessarily eggs). They are available from pharmacies and supermarkets. Consider the following when buying combs ...

Choosing a head lice comb

Plastic combs

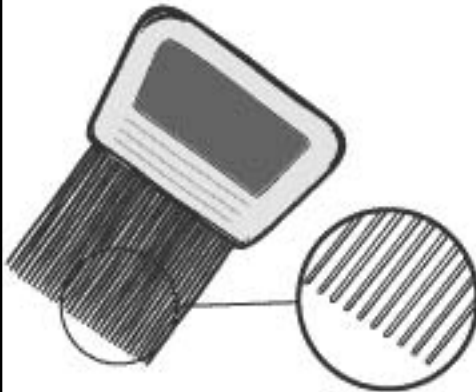
- cost approximately \$2
- safe and gentle for people of all ages to use
- when used with hair conditioner, they remove:
 - most head lice
 - some eggs
- easily cleaned with an old toothbrush



Metal combs

– cylindrical teeth

- cost approximately \$20
- gentle on scalp and hair
- when used with hair conditioner they remove:
 - most head lice
 - most eggs
- dental floss will remove the eggs and hair debris which may clog the base of the comb
- are long lasting



Metal combs

– flat teeth

- cost approximately \$8
- can scratch the scalp and tangle long hair
- when used with hair conditioner, they remove:
 - some head lice
 - few eggs
- can be cleaned with dental floss
- are long lasting



Electronic combs

- cost approximately \$45 plus the ongoing cost of batteries
- cannot be used on wet hair, therefore cannot be used for conditioner and combing
- cannot be used on babies
- should not be used by people with epilepsy, heart disease, pacemakers,
- remove head lice from very short hair only
- do not remove the eggs
- clean the teeth with the small brush provided



Treatment

It is recommended that you use:

- The conditioner and combing technique as a treatment alone or
- The conditioner and combing technique in between the use of a chemical treatment.

It is essential to check for effectiveness after each application of a chemical product (refer to instructions below). Some head lice are resistant to some chemical treatments. This means that this treatment will not be effective in killing head lice.

Using Chemical Treatments:

- Use only chemicals designed to treat head lice.
(Refer to Choosing and using chemical treatments safely and wisely)
- Apply chemical only if you actually find live head lice.
- Cover the child's eyes.
- Apply product to **dry hair** (if wet hair is advised in the instructions, use the least amount of water).
- Apply product thoroughly to scalp and all hairs from roots to tips.
- Comb through to spread evenly. Comb several times if hair is long.
- Leave product in hair for the time recommended by the manufacturer.
- **Check for effectiveness** – use a fine tooth head lice comb to comb all of the hairs from roots to tips. If product has dried, apply some water to moisten the hair. After each sweep, wipe the combings onto a tissue. Repeat until all hair has been combed at least twice.
- Wait 5 minutes for the head lice to dry off. Observe the lice for movement and decide if the treatment is effective or not.

Ineffective:

Some lice run around or wave their legs and antennae.



Select a product with a **different active ingredient**. See Table of Products. Show the pharmacist your head lice record and request advice on choosing an alternative treatment or consider using the conditioner and combing

Effective:

All lice are dead.



Apply same product every 7 days (maximum 3 times) to kill the lice hatching from the eggs. **Use conditioner and combing** every 2 days in between to improve the effectiveness of the treatment.

After first application: eggs will be present. In 7 days use conditioner and combing to detect lice. If lice are found apply product again.

After second application: if there are still lice, apply product again in 7 days.

After third application: if lice are still present, continuing using conditioner and combing only.



Remember:

- anyone can get head lice
- check weekly, treat quickly and tell the school

Choosing and using chemical treatments safely and wisely

The two most important things to think about when choosing and using chemical treatments are **safety** and **effectiveness**.

Choosing a chemical treatment product

- Choose only chemical treatments designed specifically to treat head lice.
- Choose only chemical treatments which have an 'Aust. L' or 'Aust R' number on the label. These products are licensed or registered with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia. This means they are approved for safety. Be wary of chemical treatments which are not officially approved.

Four group concept

Chemical treatments are grouped according to the active ingredient (which is responsible for killing the head lice). If you use a chemical treatment and it does not kill the head lice, choose a product with a different active ingredient; that is, one from a different group (see table at right). Products from the same group will probably not work as the active ingredient will be the same. The Table of Products lists **some** chemical treatments currently available. New treatments continue to come on to the market. Your pharmacist can help you choose a product.

Using chemical treatments

- Chemical treatments are **insecticides** (poisons) and need to be used with caution.
- Check for safety warnings about pregnancy, breast feeding and young children. If you have any questions about safety, check with your pharmacist.
- Use a chemical treatment only when you actually find head lice. This avoids unnecessary exposure to chemicals. Use the conditioner and combing technique to find lice.

- Chemical treatments do not repel head lice. They should not be used to prevent head lice.
- Chemical treatments are only safe when they are used as directed on the label. Overuse can damage the scalp.
- Many chemicals can be absorbed through the skin.
- Any chemical treatment may cause allergy or irritation. Discuss any concerns about side effects with your pharmacist.
- A chemical treatment is effective when it actually kills the head lice. To work properly, the chemical treatment must be in contact with the head lice at the right concentration and for the right amount of time. Make sure you follow the instructions carefully.
- No one chemical treatment will work for everyone. It is essential to check for effectiveness every time you use a chemical treatment.
- **No chemical treatment will kill eggs.** The eggs will continue to hatch after the treatment. Therefore it is essential to apply the second treatment one week later to kill any young lice that have hatched. The conditioner and combing technique can be used in between to help remove lice that are hatching.
- Resistance to chemical treatments is a problem in Australia. Research into this problem is continuing. The only way of dealing with resistance is to check for effectiveness every time you use a chemical treatment (for more information see *Treatment*).
- If chemical products don't work or you have concerns about their use, conditioner and combing can be an effective treatment if used every 2 days until no head lice are found for 10 consecutive days.

Table of Products

approved in Australia by the Therapeutic Goods Administration to April 2001.

Active Ingredient	Product Names
1. Pyrethrins	Amcal Head Lice Foam Banlice Mousse Delva Formula PCT Lyban Foam Meditox Foam Pyrenel Pyrifoam Lotion
2.Synthetic Pyrethroids (bioallethrin, permethrin)	Orange Medic Orange Medic Plus Paralice Pyrifoam Head Lice Treatment Quellada Creme Rinse Quellada Head Lice Treatment
3. Organophosphates	Cleansheen Exolice Medicated Foam HL 7 HLT KP24 Foam KP24 Lotion Lice Rid LX Medicated Foam
4. Combinations Herbal & Essential Oils	Herba Lice Herbs for Headlice Lice Attack Lice Blaster New Improved Lysout Gel Lysout Spray Natural Head Lice Treatment Neutra Lice Quit Nits Natural Head Lice Treatment Sunspirit Aromatherapy Lice Scents to Kill Tea Tree Lice Foam Wild Child All Natural Head Lice Treatment



When treatment does not seem to work

It is very frustrating when you are doing everything that is recommended and nothing seems to work. Some possible reasons for this may include:

Poor application of the product

- Whether using a hair conditioner or a chemical treatment, the product must be applied to all hairs, from the roots to the tips.
- If using a chemical product, it must be in contact with the head lice for the right amount of time. Leave the product on the hair for the time stated on the label.

Applying only one treatment

- Applying any treatment only once will fail (conditioner and combing or chemical treatments). Even if the lice are killed or removed, the eggs will continue to hatch.
- If choosing the conditioner and combing treatment repeat every two days until there are no head lice found for 10 consecutive days.
- If choosing chemical treatments reapply usually one week later, paying careful attention to the instructions on the package.

Resistance to chemical treatments

- Resistance is when the chemical treatment does not kill the head lice.
- You will not know if the head lice are resistant to the chemical treatment you are using before

you try it. The only way to know is to check for effectiveness after you have used it (see *Treatment*).

- Resistance can be a complex issue. Some lice don't die, some take longer to die.
- The best way of addressing resistance is to check for effectiveness at each treatment (See *Treatment*). Conditioner and combing is an effective method to use if resistance is a problem.
- The use of smaller doses of chemical products for prevention doesn't work and increases resistance.

Catching head lice again

- Sometimes the treatment has worked, but you may have head lice again. This is a new head lice condition.
- By checking every week you will be able to manage a new head lice condition easily with conditioner and combing because you have caught the condition early and there will be fewer lice present.

Assistance is available. See information sheet *Who can help me?* and please contact the school administration with any concerns.



Conditioner and combing



Head Lice Record

Use the boxes below to record when you check and, if needed, treat head lice.

Put a tick if you have no head lice.

Put a cross if you find head lice.



Detection

Do conditioner and combing once a week or every 2 days if someone close to you has head lice.

Term	Week1	Week2	Week3	Week4	Week5	Week6	Week7	Week8	Week9	Week10	Week11
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐
Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐
Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐
Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐
Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐
Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐
Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐

Treatment

Keep doing conditioner and combing every 2 days until no more adult head lice have been found for 10 days.

Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐	Mon ☐
Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐	Tues ☐
Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐	Wed ☐
Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐	Thu ☐
Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐	Fri ☐
Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐	Sat ☐
Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐	Sun ☐



In the boxes below, write details of the chemical treatment you use.

If a treatment is ineffective, ask your pharmacist to help you to choose another treatment from a different chemical group.

Name Year level



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Chemical treatment

You can use conditioner and combing every 2 days in between chemical treatments to remove newly hatched lice.

Product - Brand used	Chemical group used	Date of application	Results (Tick one box)	
			Effective (Lice not moving)	Ineffective (Lice running)
1	1. PYRETHRINS 2. SYNTHETIC PYRETHROIDS (Bioallethrin, Permethrin) 3. ORGANOPHOSPHATES (Maldison, Malathion) 4. OTHER (herbal extracts, essential oils).	1st		
		2nd		
		3rd if needed		
2		1st		
		2nd		
		3rd if needed		
3		1st		
		2nd		
		3rd if needed		

What about the house and personal belongings?

Head lice need to spend their entire life on human heads to survive. They feed on the scalp by sucking blood and lay their eggs on the hair close to the scalp. Head lice will die from dehydration within 6 to 24 hours when removed from the human head, depending on humidity and when they last fed.

Recent scientific research in Queensland has clarified the following concerns:

Hats

- Sharing hats presents no risk. It does not increase the chance of getting head lice.
- Researchers examined the hats worn by 1000 school children and found **no** head lice even when many head lice were found on the children's heads.

Combs and grooming implements

- Place hair grooming implements in a container of very hot water (just after boiling) for at least 30 seconds. This will kill any head lice caught in the comb after grooming. It should be done by an adult.

- Be aware hot water burns like fire; be sure your child cannot reach their comb while it is in the container of hot water.

Floors

- Researchers examined 118 carpeted classroom floors and found no head lice or eggs. When the students from those classrooms were examined, they had a total of 14 563 live head lice on their heads.

Bed linen

- The pillow cases of people with head lice are a **very low risk** in spreading head lice. Any head lice found on pillow cases will die within 6 to 24 hours. Although pillow cases are a **very low risk**, you may want to use a hot wash or soak in hot water (just after boiling) for at least 30 seconds or place in a hot clothes dryer for 15 minutes.

There is no evidence to indicate that other household items are a risk of spreading head lice.

Time is precious – we are a busy family.
We are using our time wisely by
concentrating on our heads.



Who can help me?

All families are welcome to seek further help from a number of support people. These include the school principal (see 'Our school supports you in managing head lice at home' section) and:

School head lice support volunteer

Our school has nominated and supports a volunteer/s who:

- may be a parent, teacher, principal, administration staff or other adult authorised by the school and the Parents and Citizen's Association;
- is well informed about detecting and treating head lice; and
- maintains confidentiality.

Families can either ask for support or agree to accept support offered by our volunteer. To use the services of our support volunteer, contact:

Telephone:

School health nurse

In Queensland, school health nurses do not inspect heads for head lice as part of school health screening programs. Our school health nurse may:

- assist school head lice support volunteer/s;
- assist families referred by volunteer/s;
- refer people to their pharmacist and/or doctor if needed.

Child health program

At your local child health clinic, Queensland Health nurses can provide professional advice at the clinic or over the telephone to individuals, families and organisations, about how to manage head lice.

Look for your local child health clinic in the *White Pages*TM under Health, Queensland Department and Children's Community Health Services.

Community participation officer

At your local Education Queensland District Office you will find a community participation officer who can provide assistance with:

- planning a whole of school approach to managing head lice
- workshops and presentations
- advising around sensitive issues
- advocacy in a complaints situation.

Contact details may be obtained from the school administration.

Parents and Citizen's Association

Our school Parents and Citizen's Association supports the health and safety of our school. Regarding head lice it may:

- assist the principal to identify people to become school head lice support volunteers;
- ensure that our school always has at least one school head lice support volunteer; and
- provide support to the school volunteer/s.

Pharmacist (Chemist)

Your local pharmacist can help you:

- choose the appropriate head lice comb;
- choose an appropriate product to treat head lice;
- understand how to apply the product properly; and
- understand how to check the product's effectiveness.



Take the *head lice record* with you to provide your pharmacist with as much information as possible about:

- the type of product you last used;
- the dates the product was used; and
- the results obtained with that product.

Hairdresser

Your hairdresser can assist you to choose a hairstyle that makes both checking and treating head lice easier.

Family doctor

See your family doctor about:

- severe and chronic head lice conditions;
- any infection on the head caused by scratching. Scratching is not a reliable sign of head lice. There may be another reason for scratching.
- problems with allergy or reactions to chemical treatments.