

10 steps to help keep head lice and their eggs out of your child's hair.

1. Watch for signs of head lice, such as frequent head scratching. Anyone can get head lice... mainly by head-to-head contact, but also from sharing personal items such as hats or brushes from an infested person.
2. Check all family members for lice and lice eggs (nits) at least once a week. Only those infested should be treated. Lice are reddish-brown wingless insects, nits are grayish-white, always oval shaped, and glued at an angle to the side of the hair shaft.
3. Be sure not to confuse nits with hair debris, which appears as bright white irregularly-shaped clumps of dandruff stuck to the hair shaft. Another form of debris may appear as elongated segments of dandruff encircling the hair shaft and is easily dislodged. Lice treatment is not appropriate for hair debris.
4. Consult your pharmacist or physician before either applying or using lice treatment pesticides if you are pregnant, nursing, have allergies, asthma, or lice or nits in the eyebrows or eyelashes. Never use a pesticide on or near the eyes.
5. Purchase an over-the-counter treatment product for head lice. The NPA strongly discourages the use of lindane products — commonly referred to as Kwell® — but also available in generic versions. All lice-killing products are pesticides and must be used with caution.
6. Follow package directions carefully. Use the product over the sink, not in the tub or shower. Always keep the eyes covered.
7. Remove all nits. This assures total lice treatment. Separate hair in sections and work on one section at a time, removing all attached nits with a nit-removal comb, baby safety scissors, or your fingernails.
8. Wash bedding and recently worn clothing in hot water and dry in hot dryer. Combs and brushes may be soaked in hot (not boiling) water for 10 minutes or cleaned with an old toothbrush and soapy water.
9. Avoid lice sprays. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals and car seats.
10. Notify your child's school, camp, child care provider and neighborhood parents. Check for lice on a regular basis. This is the best way to protect your family and community.