



Kantonsärztlicher Dienst

What Parents Should Know About Head Lice

Where are head lice found?

Head lice occur all over the world. They can be very uncomfortable, but are basically harmless. As a rule they are acquired by direct head-to-head contact, for example during play or sports, at home or in school. Transmission via inanimate objects such as combs, hairbrushes, hats, bed linen or towels is rarer. **Contrary to widespread belief – the presence of head lice is not the result of insufficient hygiene.** Even daily hair washing is no protection against an infestation. Infestations by head lice should never be ignored or covered up. Only a joint effort can be effective in combating head lice.

How can head lice be recognized?

The head lice themselves are difficult to see. They are small insects measuring about 3mm (similar to a sesame seed). With their legs they cling firmly to the hair shafts and scalp of their hosts. They are neither able to jump or fly. They are of a greyish-white colour and so adapt easily to the colour of the hair. They cause intense itching to the scalp and constant scratching. They lay their eggs (also called nits) attached to the hair shafts close to the roots. These nits (light-coloured pouches measuring about 1mm) are easy to find. They look like dandruff but stick firmly to the hair. They are hard to remove and do not disappear after a normal shampooing. Most often they are found behind the ears, at the nape of the neck or around the temples. **The presence of a single nit proves the infestation by head lice and makes a course of treatment necessary.** The young lice hatch from their eggs after 7 to 10 days.

What should you do?

1. Inform the kindergarten or schoolteacher immediately if you discover head lice or nits on your child.
2. Following the discovery of head lice on one child, all the children will be checked for signs of infestation by the school doctor or another person appointed by him or her.
3. Even if no head lice or nits are found on your child, you must check your child's hair for signs of infestation twice a week until you know that there are no further cases of lice among your child's fellow classmates.
4. **If your child does have head lice, you are responsible for carrying out the necessary treatment.** The school doctor or your family doctor will advise you.

Name of child: _____

Dear parents

An examination on the (date) _____ showed the presence of head lice in your child's class.

- Head lice or nits** were found on your child. Please start a course of treatment as described in this leaflet immediately.
- No nits** were found on your child. Please check your child's hair for the presence of nits regularly (at least twice a week) during the next days and weeks. If you should discover nits or head lice please start a course of treatment as described in this leaflet immediately.

With kind regards

The school doctor

Directions for treatment of head lice:

1. If your child is diagnosed as having lice, his or her hair must be treated immediately with such medication as Prioderm, Loxazol (see below)! **The products on offer may change at any time! The instructions in the packet must be followed carefully.** Your chemist or your family doctor will advise you.
2. All other family members should be treated at the same time, even if they do not have lice. Pregnant or breast-feeding women and babies should speak to their family doctor before starting treatment. There is no need to treat family pets.
3. Clothing, bed linen and towels, which are in use at the time of diagnosis, must be washed at a minimum temperature of 60 °C. Dry cleaning is also effective.
4. Clothes which cannot be washed at high temperatures or other non washable articles (e.g. stuffed animals) must be placed in a closed plastic bag for 14 days or put in the deep-freezer for at least 24 hours.
5. Combs, brushes and other washable personal toilet articles should be soaked in hot soapy water for at least 10 minutes (54°C).
6. Upholstery, bed-covers, mattresses, pillows, bicycle-helmets, Sofas and car seats should be vacuumed.
7. Hats, caps, scarves, bicycle-helmets, hair utensils (such as combs, brushes, headbands etc.) should not be exchanged among people. Long hair should be tied back.
8. After the treatment nits are frequently still found stuck to the hair. **All nits must be removed with a fine tooth comb (special nit combs), fingernails or scissors. The treatment is not completed until all nits have been removed.**

Day 1	<p>Bed linen Clothes</p> <p>With soapy water 60°C</p>		<p>Stuffed animals Dolls</p> <p>14 days!</p>	
	<p>PRIODERM</p>		<p>LOXAZOL</p>	
	<p>Wash hair with Prioderm</p>		<p>Wash hair with ordinary shampoo</p>	
	<p>After 5 minutes ⇒</p>			
	<p>Wash hair with Prioderm</p>		<p>(entire bottle!) Wash hair with Loxazol</p>	
	<p>After 5 minutes ⇒</p>		<p>After 10 minutes ⇒</p>	
	<p>Comb hair</p>		<p>Comb hair</p>	
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4	<p>Treatment as on day 1!</p>			
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7	<p>Treatment as on day 1!</p>		<p>Treatment as on day 1!</p>	
Day 8				
Day 9				

Avoid contact with chlorinated water

do not wash hair with ordinary shampoo

Do not dry hair with hair-dryer