

# Non-insecticidal Treatment for Head Lice

## 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment for Head Lice

Head lice can be more easily removed by applying plenty of hair conditioner to hair before combing to remove live lice and eggs (nits). Any type of hair conditioner may be used, including inexpensive 'generic' brands, together with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb.

### How does it work?

The hair conditioner works by immobilizing the lice so that it is easier to trap them in the teeth of the comb. Without the hair conditioner to slow them down, lice can be difficult to catch – they can run about 30 cm in 60 seconds. Hair conditioner also reduces friction, making combing easier, especially when using a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb that the teeth don't bunch together and the hair separates easily. Even if only one or two lice are missed, they can lay about 6 eggs per day, and the cycle of infestation will continue.

### Why the 10 day treatment period?

Generally, eggs 'nits' will hatch 7-8 days after being laid on the hair shaft. However, some researchers have found that a few eggs may hatch as late as 9-10 days after being laid. The 10-day period is therefore recommended as the most effective time to break the reproductive cycle of the head lice.

### What to do:

- Apply plenty of hair conditioner to the hair until saturated.
- Comb through with an ordinary comb or brush to remove tangles.
- Section and comb the hair thoroughly with a metal fine-tooth 'nit' comb in 4 directions – forwards, backwards, left and right. Use additional conditioner, if the comb tugs the hair or the hair is too dry.
- Wipe the comb on a white paper towel to check that the dark adult lice or the paler hatchlings are being removed. Hatchlings are young lice which emerge from eggs. You may need to use a magnifying glass and a strong light to see the lice and eggs.
- Using white hair conditioner may make it easier to see the head lice.
- Rinse the hair conditioner out and dry the hair.
- Repeat this process every day for 10 days to cover the hatching period of the eggs. This removes the hatchlings which emerge from missed eggs.
- After completion of the 10-day treatment, check for lice re-infestation once a week for at least 4 weeks. Hair conditioner makes the inspection easier.
- Check all other household members for head lice infestation using the method described above.

### How to remove eggs:

Some eggs will be removed by combing, but others are harder to detach. You may need to use your fingernails to remove as many eggs as possible from the base of the hair shaft near to the scalp. Remember, only those eggs within 1 cm of the scalp will hatch. Those eggs which have grown further out the hair shaft will already be hatched or dead; however, it is recommended that **all nits** be removed.