

Insecticide Treatment for Head Lice

The medicated shampoos used to treat head lice contain chemicals called insecticides that kill live lice and should be used with caution. Consult with the pharmacist to determine the appropriate medicated shampoo for your child(ren). **It is important not to treat anyone with an insecticide unless lice or nits are found.**

How to Use Insecticides:

- It is important to carefully read and follow the package instructions.
- Apply the insecticide by lifting the hair in sections and saturating. Work from the back of the head to the front. Pay particular attention to treating behind the ears, at the nape of the neck and close to the scalp.
- Don't leave the insecticide shampoo or rinse in the hair longer than directed. Rinse the hair well after treatment. It's best to do the treatment and rinsing **over a sink**, not in the bath or shower, so that other parts of the body do not come in contact with the product.
- Following the treatment, section the hair and comb through with a nit comb to remove dead lice and eggs. If any head lice are found after 24-48 hours re-treat the hair with an insecticide from a different family. Consult with a pharmacist re product choice, alternatively, the 10 Day Conditioner Treatment method can be used.
- The medicated shampoo treatment must be repeated in 7-10 days according to package instructions.

Key points to remember:

- No insecticide is guaranteed to kill all eggs. Eggs which are not killed or removed manually will hatch 7-10 days after being laid. If all eggs are not removed, some will hatch, mature in about one week and start laying more eggs, continuing the cycle.
- Following insecticide treatment, remove as many eggs as possible. Removal of eggs must be done daily. Pay particular attention to removing the eggs which are found within 1 cm of the scalp as it is more likely that these have not yet hatched.
- It is not recommended to use insecticide treatment more than three times.

Nit Picking:

The manual removal of the nits must be done and this is the **most** important step. Nitpicking needs to be done daily to remove any nits that may be present. If all nits are not removed they will hatch into crawling lice, generating a cycle of reinfestation. The nit comb recommended would have round metal teeth that are 4-5 cm long and have a separation of 1 mm. (i.e. LiceMeister)

- Nit removal done properly takes time. Be patient and allow your child to watch a movie, TV, read a book, or play a game while it is being done.
- Work under good light on wet hair.
- Visibility is important, a magnifying glass or “drugstore” reading glasses may help.
- Use a regular brush or comb to remove tangles, divide the hair in sections and fasten off hair that is not being worked on.
- Use fingernails (may be more effective) or the lice comb and go through each section of hair from the scalp to the end of the hair. Dispose of lice nits carefully (i.e. in trash or toilet).
- Look through each section of hair for live lice or attached nits, go on to the next section of hair until the entire scalp has been completed and no more lice or nits are found.
- Nit picking needs to be done **daily** until after the second treatment and all nits are gone.
- Wash combs, brushes or anything put on the head with soap and boil in water for ten minutes.

Sources: CPS Infectious Disease and Immunization Committee, Oct. 2004, New Brunswick Health and Wellness, University of Toronto, Public Health, Framingham School Health Services, Harvard School of Public Health

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