



Head Lice Prevention and Treatment Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- I. Before applying treatment, it may be helpful to remove clothing that can become wet or stained during treatment.
- II. Apply lice medicine, also called pediculicide, according to the instructions contained in the box or printed on the label. If the infested person has very long hair (longer than shoulder length), it may be necessary to use a second bottle. Pay special attention to the instructions on the label or in the box regarding how long the medication should be left on the hair and how it should be washed out.

WARNING: Do not use a combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for one – two days after the lice medicine is removed.

- III. Have the infested person put on clean clothing after treatment.
- IV. If a few live lice are still found eight – 12 hours after treatment, but are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. The medicine may take longer to kill all the lice. Comb dead and any remaining live lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit comb.
- V. If, after eight – 12 hours of treatment, no dead lice are found, and lice seem as active as before, the medicine may not be working. Do not re-treat until speaking with your healthcare provider; a different pediculicide may be necessary. If your health care provider recommends a different pediculicide, carefully follow the treatment instructions contained in the box or printed on the label.
- VI. Nit (head lice egg) combs, often found in lice medicine packages, should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft. Many flea combs made for cats and dogs are also effective.
- VII. After each treatment, checking the hair and combing with a nit comb to remove nits and lice every two – three days may decrease the chance of self-re-infestation. Continue to check for two – three weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone. Nit removal is not needed when treating with spinosad topical suspension.
- VIII. Retreatment is meant to kill any surviving hatched lice before they produce new eggs. For some drugs, retreatment is recommended routinely about a week after the first treatment (seven – nine days, depending on the drug) and for others only if crawling lice are seen during this period. Retreatment with lindane shampoo is not recommended.
- IX. Supplemental Measures: Head lice do not survive long if they fall off a person and cannot feed. You do not need to spend a lot of time or money on housecleaning activities. Follow these steps to help avoid re-infestation by lice that have recently fallen off the hair or crawled onto clothing or furniture:
 - A. Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that the infested person wore or used during the two days before treatment using the hot water (130° F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle. Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry cleaned OR sealed in a plastic bag and stored for two weeks.
 - B. Soak combs and brushes in hot water (at least 130° F) for five – 10 minutes.
 - C. Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or laid. However, the risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a rug or carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than one – two days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp. Spending much time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to avoid re-infestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing.
 - D. Do not use fumigant sprays; they can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.