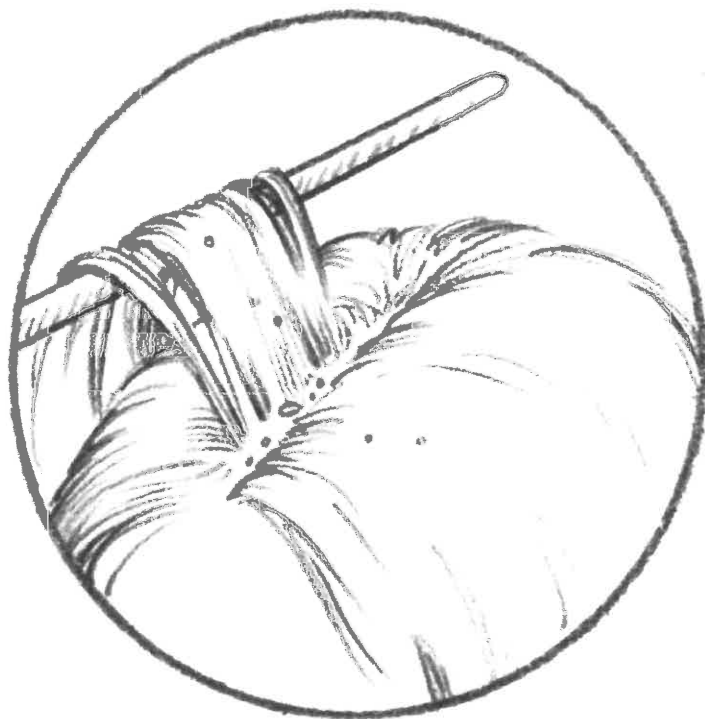


Head lice

What they are, how to spot them
and how to treat them



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What are head lice?



Head lice are small insects, about the size of a sesame seed once adult (the ones you find on burger buns).

They live on the head, keeping close to the scalp to stay warm. Head lice do not voluntarily move far away from the scalp. They only live on human beings, so they cannot be caught from household pets.

What are nits?

Nits are not head lice. Head lice are the insects that move around the head. Head lice lay eggs, which they glue to the hair. When the egg hatches, it turns white but remains stuck to the hair. A nit is this empty eggshell. If you find nits, it does not mean you currently have head lice. The nit may stay stuck to the hair until it grows out.

Who gets head lice?

Anybody can get head lice. Children may get them more often as they spend more time with their heads together but adults can get them as well.

Where and how do you catch head lice?

Head lice are passed when heads are touching. The longer and more often you have head to head contact with someone who has head lice, the more likely it is that you will get them too. This is most often between close family and friends and during times of play at home and in school.

Parents often worry more about head lice when children go back to school as they think head lice are only caught there. Yet head lice are as common during school holidays as during term time so it is important to keep checking in the holidays.

Head lice cannot be caught from objects that hair touches such as a chair back however it is sensible not to share hats and to wash combs between use.

Do head lice cause itching straight away?

It usually takes two to three months for people to get an itch due to head lice. The itch is due to an allergy to the head lice and some people with head lice will never suffer from itching. This is why everyone should check for head lice every week.

Have I got head lice?

You only have head lice if you find a living, moving louse in your hair. See 'how do I spot lice', on the next page

Can you prevent head lice?

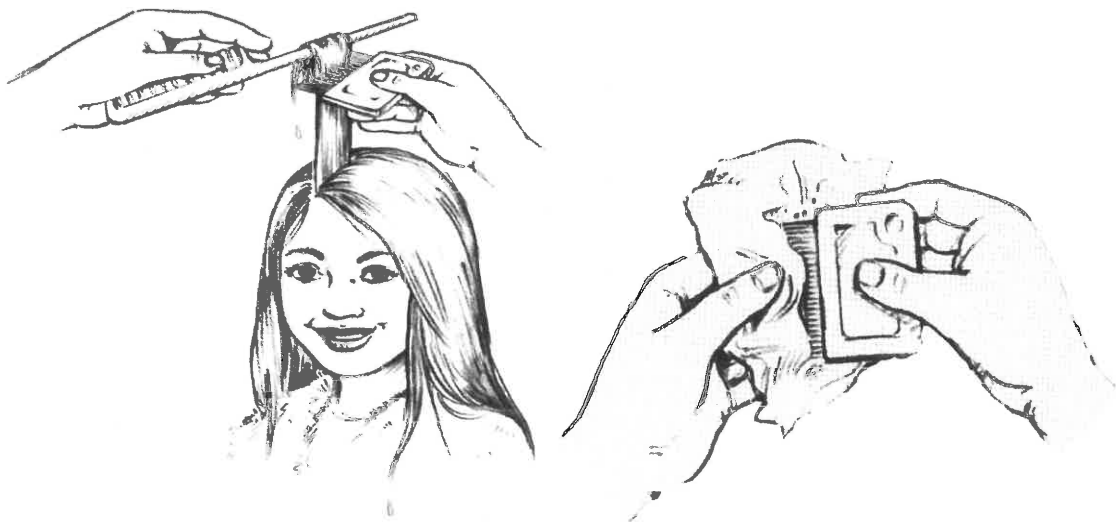
Yes, where families and households check their own heads regularly. This way they find head lice quickly, treat them and make sure that they don't pass them on to family and friends.

The way to check heads is called "detection combing". It should be done at least once a week. It can help children if this becomes a fun part of their weekly routine e.g. on hair wash night go 'searching for beasties'. If a living, moving louse is found on someone's head, check other members of the household as well. Treat everyone who has head lice at the same time.

Don't treat anyone who hasn't got head lice, it won't help. You should also think back to who has been in contact with the family members with head lice, so that you can let them know and they can check for lice as well. Use the chart on page 4 as a guide.

How to detection comb

1. Dampen the hair thoroughly and apply a small amount of oil or conditioner
2. Make sure there is good lighting
3. Comb the hair with an ordinary comb
4. Using a special detection comb:
Begin at the top of the head and making sure that the comb is **touching the scalp** comb slowly towards the end of the hair then clean off the comb with a clean white tissue and inspect for lice.
5. Check the teeth of the comb carefully.
6. Repeat steps 4&5, working your way around the head.



All the people on your list should check themselves and everyone in their household for head lice using a detection comb.

	Name(s)	Told (✓)
Parents/Carers		
Grandparents		
Brothers/ sisters		
Sons/ daughters		
Aunts/ Uncles		
Cousins		
Nieces/ nephews		
Babysitters		
School/ nursery		
Friends		
Clubs		
Guides/Scouts		
Others		

How do I get rid of head lice?

Head lice can be treated through careful combing which physically removes the lice, though this takes some time to work (see page 8) or through the application of topical products from your local pharmacy that kill the lice.

What should I do if I find lice?

There is a convenient service available for people who are registered with a Calderdale GP, provided by most pharmacists (displaying the logo on the back of the booklet) to help you detect and treat head lice properly. Detection combs are provided free and the treatment products are also **free** if you normally get free prescriptions.

When you visit your pharmacist, if you have already found lice, or something you are unsure about, stick it/them on a piece of white paper with clear sticky tape and take it with you (mark clearly which individual the lice have come from). Taking the lice with you helps the pharmacist to give you the right advice, especially where a treatment method has not worked. How the pharmacy programme works is shown on the chart on page 7.

The pharmacist will talk with you, and can show you how to "detection comb" yourself and other members of your household. If you find that you need treatment, the pharmacist can prescribe the best treatment method for each infected individual. **Tea-tree oil**, may have some insecticidal activity, and certainly antiseptic activity which may prevent bacterial infections, however safe and effective strengths of this potentially toxic product have not been tested scientifically, and therefore Tea-tree oil cannot be recommended for the treatment of head lice.

How to use topical head lice products

All family/household members found to have head lice should be treated at the same time. This prevents re-infection.

DO NOT use head lice lotions unless you have found a living, moving head louse.

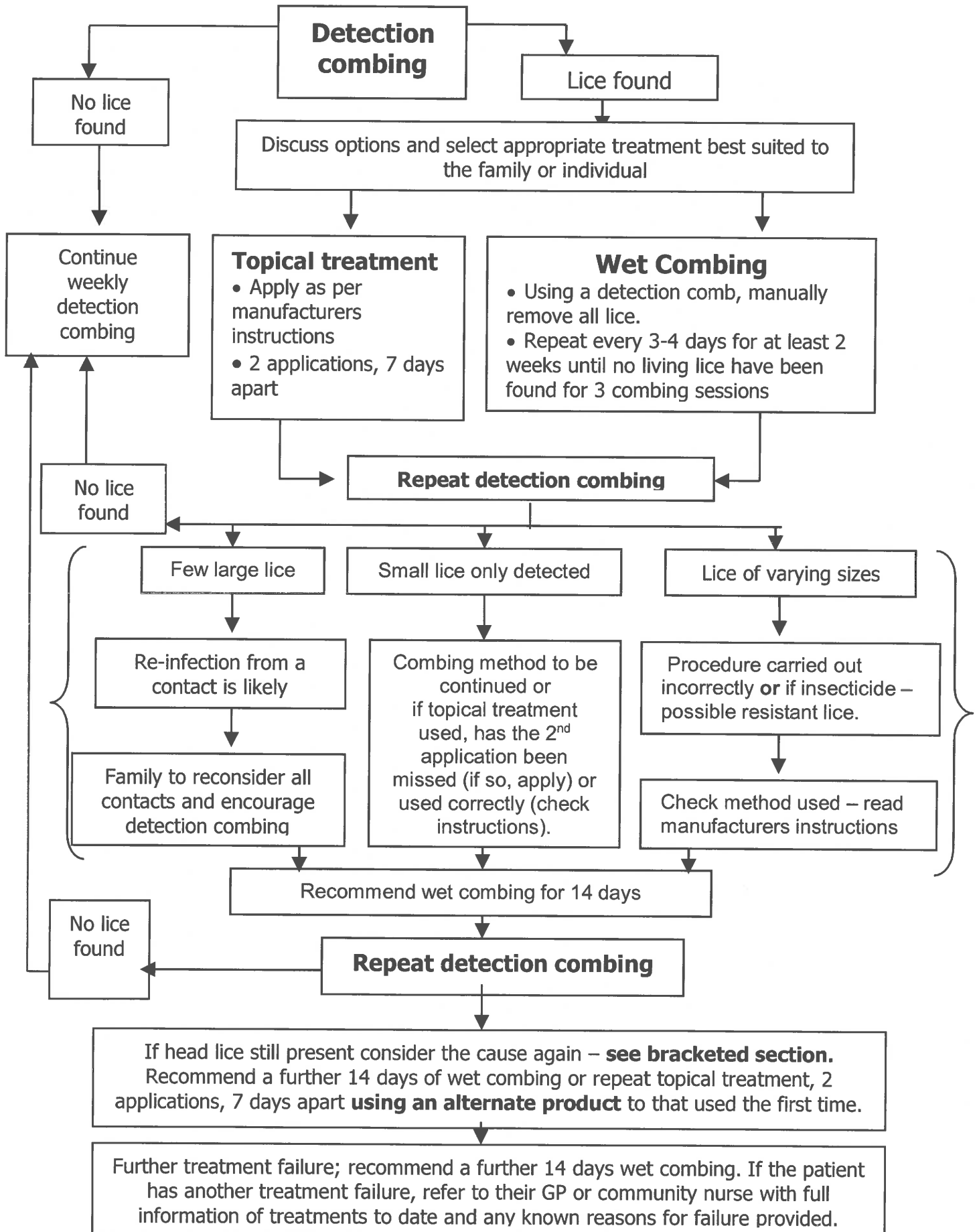
DO NOT use head lice lotions on children under 6 months of age without discussion with your doctor

Chlorine may affect the success of the treatment, so if you have been swimming in the 3 days before treatment DO wash and dry your hair well before applying the product.

- Use the product in a well ventilated room
- Apply the treatment to dry hair
- Part the hair into small sections and rub the lotion into the scalp and hair until it is thoroughly wet. For long hair, treat the hair close to the head e.g. down as far as a pony tail band (all the way to the ends if recommended by the manufacturer)
- Keep the product on overnight, or as long is as recommended by the manufacturer (usually 8-12 hours).
- Do not use a hairdryer – let the hair dry naturally
- For all products, shampoo the hair and rinse well once treatment completed
- After seven days, apply the second treatment in exactly the same way – this is essential for treatment to work.
- Check everyone in the household again two or three days after the second treatment. If live lice are found, stick them to a piece of white paper with clear sticky tape marking clearly which individual the lice have come from. Take them to your pharmacist and ask for further help.

DO NOT USE HEAD LICE LOTION MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK

Flow chart for the management of head lice.



Treating headlice – The Wet Combing Method Illustrated

1



Wash hair with your
normal shampoo

2



Rinse off

3



Comb the hair with a
normal comb and apply
a small amount of oil or
hair conditioner

4



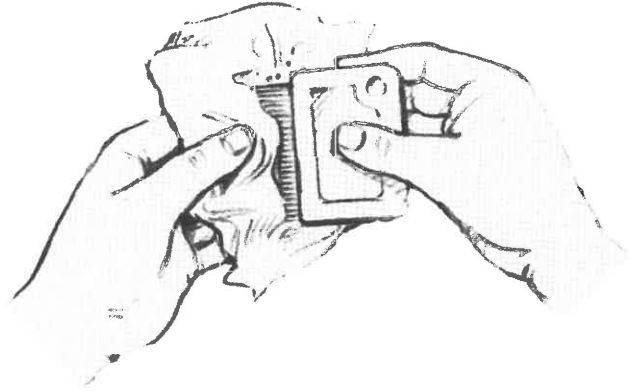
Work through the hair in
small sections

5



Comb from the scalp to the ends of the hair

6



Check the comb for lice with each section

7



Each combing session may take 20 minutes

8

Monday ✓	Monday	Monday
Tuesday	Tuesday	Tuesday ✓
Wednesday	Wednesday ✓	Wednesday
Thursday ✓	Thursday	Thursday
Friday	Friday	Friday ✓
Saturday	Saturday ✓	Saturday
Sunday ✓	Sunday	Sunday

Repeat combing every 3 or 4 days

Facts about head lice.

- Head lice are tiny insects, which live on the hair close to the scalp. They feed from the human scalp by sucking blood from the skin.
- Both adults and children can get head lice.
- Head lice WALK from one head to another during HEAD TO HEAD contact: they do not fly or jump.
- Lice hatch from eggs and leave behind empty cases. These white cases are called nits.
- Your hair is only infected with head lice if you find a living moving louse (not a nit)

Remember:

- The best way to stop infection is to use a special detection comb regularly and treat when you find living lice. **Use a special detection comb to spot lice early**
- DO NOT use topical head lice products just in case. They won't prevent infection.
- Whenever you need help, ask your pharmacist.



This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print and other languages.