



*Health Department
Public Health Nursing
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www.co.la-crosse.wi.us/Health



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Head Lice Treatment Options

Head lice shampoo or head lice cream rinse - There are several different ways to treat lice, both medical and non-medical.

Pesticide-free Shampoo - Dimethicone - (brand name LiceMD) A pesticide-free treatment shampoo. The LiceMD gel formula lubricates hair, so parents can concentrate on removing the lice and eggs, not struggling to pull a fine tooth comb through tangled hair. Since LiceMD is pesticide-free, there is no treatment application limit.

Medicated shampoos –

- **Pyrethrin or pyrethrum** (brand names RID, A-200, Clear, Pronto, R & C) – Pyrethrins are naturally occurring pyrethroid extracts from the chrysanthemum flower. Pyrethrins are safe and effective when used as directed. Pyrethrins can only kill live lice, not unhatched eggs (nits). A second treatment is recommended in 9-10 days to kill any newly hatched lice before they can produce new eggs. Treatment failures can be common depending on whether lice are resistant to pyrethrins in the patient's geographic location. Pyrethrins generally should not be used by persons who are allergic to chrysanthemums or ragweed. Information taken from www.CDC.gov.
- **Permethrin 1%** (brand name NIX) – Permethrin is a synthetic pyrethroid similar to naturally occurring pyrethrins. Permethrin lotion 1% is approved by the FDA for the treatment of head lice. Permethrin is safe and effective when used as directed. Permethrin kills live lice but not unhatched eggs. Permethrin may continue to kill newly hatched lice for several days after treatment. A second treatment often is necessary in 9-10 days to kill any newly hatched lice before they can produce new eggs. Treatment failures can be common depending whether lice are resistant to permethrin in the patient's geographic location. Permethrin is not approved for use in children less than 2 years old. Information taken from www.CDC.gov.
- **Egg (nit) remover rinses** – because the above products leave the live eggs in the hair, they often come with a rinse product to help rinse out the eggs (nits). Use the rinse as directed after the shampoo.
- **Nit removal combs** – these often accompany the shampoo. Comb the hair thoroughly after the above shampoo and rinse to help get out any leftover nits.
- **Using Head Lice Shampoos – Always follow the directions on the package!!!**
 1. Most treatments not recommended for children under 2.
 2. Retreatment generally is recommended for most prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications after 9-10 days in order to kill any

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surviving hatched lice before they produce new eggs. Check the package carefully for instructions on retreatment.

3. Do not use regular shampoo or conditioner before you treat for head lice and wait for one to two days after using the medicated head lice shampoo to shampoo or condition hair.

The oil treatment – alternative method to Head Lice Shampoos

Non-medicated treatments – here are several harmless, but messy treatments that may eliminate lice.

- Olive oil
- Mayonnaise
- Petroleum jelly (Vaseline)

Applying olive oil to dry hair will smother and kill the louse and make nit removal easier. Olive oil works to kill lice by covering the holes through which the lice breathe, smothering them. If lice aren't completely covered by oil, they may not die, but the oil will slow them down, allowing them to be caught in a nit comb.

Directions: Apply olive oil saturating the hair and scalp. Leave olive oil on the hair until the next morning or for at least eight hours. Put a shower cap on the head and hold it in place with a bandana. Wash the hair in the morning with regular shampoo. The olive oil treatment should be repeated every three to four days for three weeks. Please see the calendar for how to treat with olive oil.

The main drawback of these treatments is that they can be very difficult to rinse out, sometimes requiring several washings over several days. The advantage to this treatment is that it is chemical, pesticide free.

Comb out the nits – this is an important step to effectively remove head lice from child. See Nit Removal information.

Cleaning the environment – See Head Lice Environmental Cleaning information.

Note: The main focus is to remove head lice from the child; cleaning the environment is important but the secondary focus!

The NOTS of Head Lice

Shaving heads is NOT recommended as a treatment for head lice!

Do NOT be angry with your child for having head lice. It is not their fault!

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