

Head lice are acquired from other infected people, mainly by direct head-to-head contact. Empty egg sacs are white and shiny and may be found further along the hair shaft as the hair grows out but are usually found above the ears and around the hairline. They look like dandruff but as they are firmly glued to the hair they cannot be shaken off. The presence of these alone does not indicate active infection. Head lice need to maintain contact with a host to survive. Many people are asymptomatic.

Diagnosis

A live moving louse must be found to confirm head lice infection. It does not have to be detected by the pharmacist.

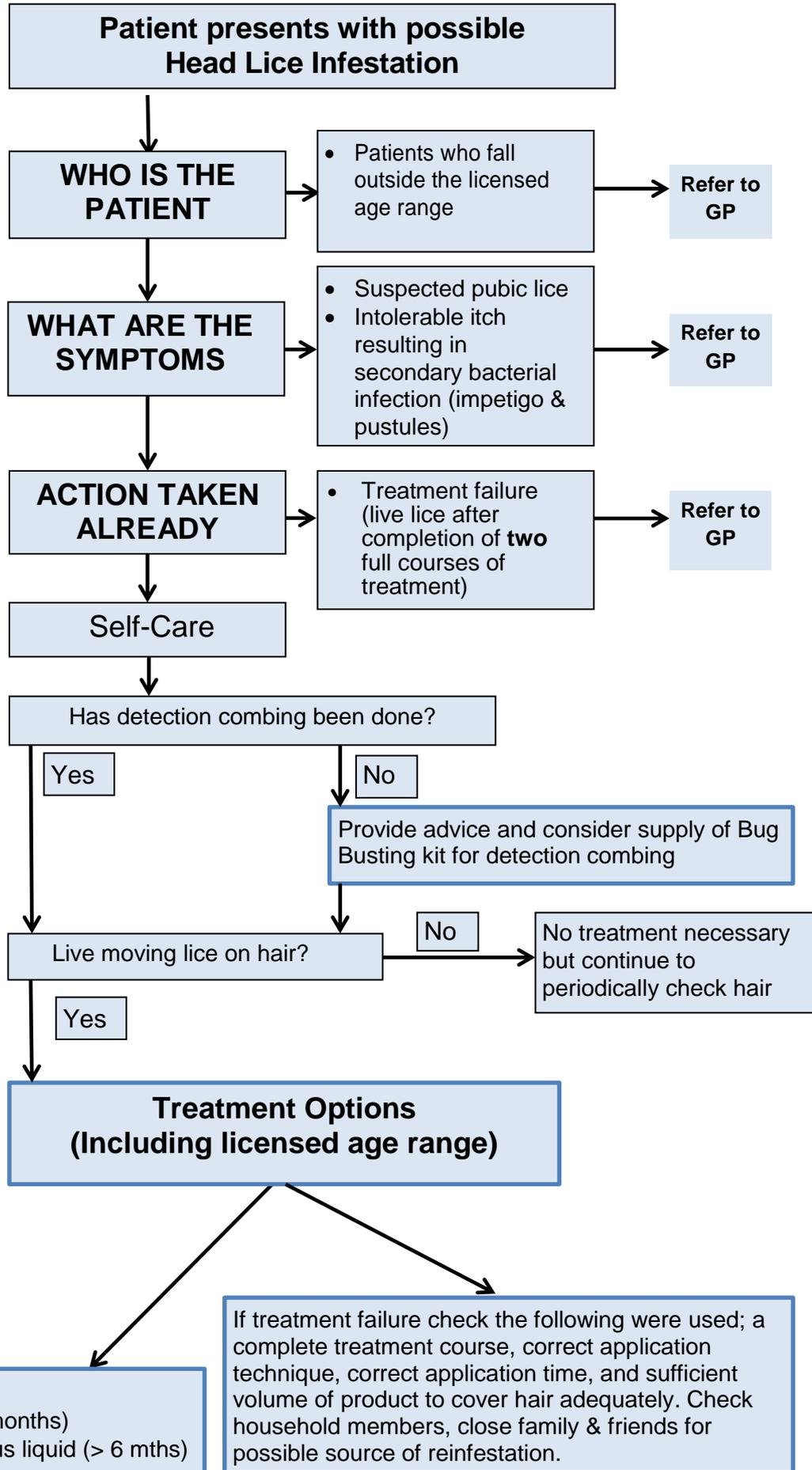
Live lice can be found anywhere on the scalp. Hatched lice live close to the scalp unless dying, or if the host sweats.

Other signs of louse infection may include;

- finding black specks like pepper (lice droppings) on pillows or collars,
- Rash on the scalp, head
- Itching – not always the first sign. Lice have usually been on the scalp for three or four months before the head starts to itch, or they may not cause itching.

Advice on Service

All family members with live infestation should be treated. Individual vouchers should be written but only **ONE** consultation fee must be claimed



Advice for Self-Care / Non Pharmaceutical Treatment

- It does not matter if the hair is dirty or clean. Lice are caught by coming into head to head contact with someone who is infested as the lice walk from one head to the other – they do not fly or jump.
- Children with head lice should continue going to school. Treat the child as soon as possible and tell the school / nursery and the parents of their close friends to look out for lice in their children.
- There is no good way of preventing head lice but it may help to tie back long hair. Head lice repellent sprays are NOT recommended
- Detection combing of children's hair every week will detect lice infection early.
- Treat only when the child has head lice. Do not be use medication to prevent head lice or "just in case". Frequent use may cause a build-up of small amounts of the active medication in the body. The risk of harm from this is very small, but it is best to use these treatments only when infected.
- **After successful treatment, it may take 2 - 3 weeks for the itch to go fully.**
- Check hair regularly. Regular brushing and combing may prevent head lice taking hold.

Who else should be checked?

- All people in the same home.
- All close family contacts.
- All friends who have had head-to-head contact in the previous 4-6 weeks.
- All affected individuals should be treated simultaneously.

Advice for Pharmaceutical Treatment

Treatment is recommended only if a live louse is found and must be performed correctly to be successful. All strategies need at least two treatment sessions - none is 100% effective.

Treat with one of the following:

- Dimeticone 4% lotion (**see important fire risk warning below**)
- Malathion 0.5% aqueous liquid
- Wet combing — this is the systematic combing of wet hair with a louse detection comb to remove head lice
Wet combing or dimeticone 4% lotion is recommended first-line for pregnant or breastfeeding women, young children aged 6 months to 2 years, and people with asthma or eczema.

All Lotions

Apply to dry hair so that the scalp and roots of the hair are saturated and work into the hair spreading evenly from roots to tips. Allow to dry naturally. Leave on the hair for 8-12 hours (see individual product SPC) or overnight. Then wash hair. Comb with detection comb while wet to remove dead lice. Repeat treatment after 7 days. A second application of insecticide is needed to kill nymphs emerging from eggs that survived the first application. Inspect hair and scalp 2-3 days after final treatment to check if it has worked. Quantity of product needed depends on length and thickness of hair. Supply sufficient lotion to allow for at least two applications. Avoid contact with eyes; do not use on broken or secondarily infected skin. Do not use more than once a week for three consecutive weeks.

After treatment

Detection combing should be carried out 2 or 3 days after completing treatment to assess response. This may be repeated 8–10 days after treatment to confirm that no louse eggs have survived. If live lice, nymphs or eggs are found, it may be due to:

1. Treatment failure. This may be due to inadequate materials, incorrect technique or resistance (if an insecticide was used). If inadequate materials were used, supply appropriate volume of treatment or an effective comb for wet combing. If inadequate application or technique likely, repeat previous treatment with correct technique, or use alternative treatment strategy. If insecticide was used properly but both adult lice and nymphs are found in first detection combing session then resistance likely. If resistance is suspected then refer to GP or change to a different type of head lice treatment (e.g. wet combing or dimeticone)

OR

2. Reinfestation. Repeat previous treatment, or use alternative treatment strategy. Check all contacts and treat affected contacts simultaneously.

Reference: CKS gives further guidance on reasons for treatment failure. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/head-lice#>

FIRE RISK WITH HEDRIN® 4% CUTANEOUS SOLUTION

As per the [SPC](#) of the product, Hedrin 4% cutaneous solution is combustible when on the hair and in direct contact with an open flame or other source of ignition; therefore during treatment hair should be kept away from open flames or other sources of ignition. To note the recommendation is that treatment should remain on the hair for a minimum of 8 hours or overnight.

The outer packaging and PIL states “Warning: Keep hair away from sources of ignition, especially naked flames and burning cigarettes, whilst being treated with Hedrin®. Treated hair can readily burn if ignited”.

Detection combing

- ‘Bug Busting Kit’ – comb

Detection combing is the procedure in which dry hair ('dry detection combing') or wet hair ('wet detection combing') is systematically combed to check for the presence of head lice using a detection comb. A detection comb is a fine-toothed comb with spacing of less than 0.3 mm. Head lice are caught using the detection comb as it is drawn through the hair. It is preferred over direct visual inspection because detection combing (on dry or wet hair) is a reliable method for detecting head lice. Dry detection combing is less laborious than wet combing, and might be recommended to large families, and to those who are less motivated.

To perform dry detection combing: Straighten and untangle the dry hair using an ordinary comb. Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to a plastic detection comb (a fine-toothed comb with spacing of less than 0.3 mm) [in the Bug Buster® kit]. From the middle of the anterior part of the scalp, comb the hair from the scalp down to the end of the hair. Raise the comb when it reaches towards the end of the hair to prevent losing lice or eggs. After each stroke, examine comb for living lice (a magnifying glass may help to distinguish lice and eggs from debris like dandruff). Continue to comb hair section by section until all the hair is combed. **Duration of combing varies with hair length e.g.** for short hair (neck visible): 3 minutes, medium length hair (reaching the shoulders): 4 minutes and hair longer than shoulder length: 5 minutes. **Check all family members at the same time.**

To perform wet detection combing: Wash the hair using an ordinary shampoo and apply conditioner. Straighten and untangle wet hair using a wide-toothed comb. Once comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to a plastic detection comb (a fine-toothed comb with spacing of less than 0.3 mm) [in the Bug Buster® kit]. Slot comb teeth into the hair at the roots, and draw down to the ends of the hair with every stroke. Examine comb for lice after each stroke. It may help to comb over a pale surface like a towel or sheet of paper. Work through hair section by section, so that all hair is combed through. Rinse out conditioner and repeat combing procedure. This may take 20–30 minutes or longer to ensure all the head is checked. **Check all family members at the same time.** Wet combing does not prevent infestation, but it can help identify a new infestation.

Treatment combing

- ‘Bug Busting Kit’ – comb

Wash hair with usual shampoo, rinse, and apply ordinary conditioner generously. Untangle and straighten hair with wide-tooth comb. Pass Bug Buster comb from roots to tips, working the head section by section. Lice lifted out will be visible in the foam. Clean the comb between strokes by wiping both sides on tissue or by rinsing. Comb each section until no more lice are found. Time needed to do the whole head ranges from 2 minutes for short, straight hair, to 30 minutes for long,

frizzy hair. Rinse off conditioner and comb again with wide-tooth comb, followed by Bug Buster comb, and then Nit Buster comb. Repeat 3 times at half weekly intervals (a total of 4 sessions over 2 weeks). If any full-grown lice are found at sessions 2, 3, or 4, continue half weekly sessions until no full-grown lice found at 3 consecutive wet combing sessions. If adult lice are repeatedly detected after 2 weeks of wet combing, review technique. Several combing sessions are needed to break the cycle of head lice. The first removes adult lice and nymphs. Subsequent sessions clear nymphs hatching from eggs laid before wet combing was started.