

Headlice & Threadworms – how to spot, treat and prevent



How to spot head lice

- Having head lice doesn't mean you're dirty. Children are most commonly affected (because they're often in close contact with other children at school), but anyone with hair can catch them.
- Head lice are tiny insects that live in human hair. They're very small (about the size of a sesame seed) and are brownish-grey in colour.
- They have six legs, each with a claw on the end. They use these to cling on to hair, and they survive by biting the scalp and feeding on blood. This often causes itching, but not always.
- The female head lice lay eggs in sacs which stick to individual hairs. A baby head louse then hatches seven to ten days later.
- You might spot the remains of the tiny empty white egg cases in your hair – these are called nits. Nits are not the same thing as lice. Lice are the insects that move around the head. You only have head lice if you can find a living, moving louse (not a nit) on the scalp. The most common places for head lice to lurk are in the hair behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.
- If you still can't spot any lice, comb the hair with a special 'nit comb'. These are available from most chemists. It's easier to spot head lice as they fall out if you comb the hair over a piece of white paper!
- Ten to fourteen days later, the baby head louse is ready to have babies of its own.

Treating and preventing head lice



- Treat head lice at home by wet combing the hair using a head lice comb or by using medicated lotion
- Your pharmacist will be able to recommend an over-the-counter lotion or spray
- The best way to stop infestation is to check the heads of your family regularly (once a week if possible) using detection combing
- Make life difficult for head lice! Use a fine comb regularly
- Further information from NHS Choices at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

How to spot threadworms

- Threadworms live in the bowel and around the bottom
- They are tiny white worms about half an inch long that look like 'threads' of white cotton – you might notice them around your child's bottom or in your or your child's poo
- Threadworms infect up to half of all children under the age of 10 in the UK
- They don't always cause symptoms, but some people have itchiness around their bottom which can be worse at night



Treating and preventing threadworms

- Keep your fingernails short and clean
- Wash the bedding of infected persons daily
- Use individual towels and flannels
- Encourage children to wash their hands with soap and water
- Remember – you can treat yourself with over-the-counter medication from your local pharmacy
- Treat the whole family to prevent re-infection
- Good hygiene is the only way to prevent the eggs from spreading further infection



- Further information from NHS Choices at <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/threadworms/Pages/Introduction.aspx>