

## **TWICE A WEEK CONTROLS HEAD LICE!**

### **CONDITIONER AND A NIT COMB - THE SOLUTION TO REINFECTION**

If all children or adults at risk put conditioner on their hair once a week and combed it out with a fine tooth comb, head lice would become a minor problem. Older kids can do this, but will need the encouragement of parents. Younger children will need parents to do this for them.

Conditioner and a fine tooth comb is a cost-effective way to stop head lice reestablishing themselves. Used once a week it can get rid of that invading louse. Apply conditioner to dry hair or even wet hair and comb off all the conditioner with a fine tooth comb. Look for lice and eggs by wiping the combings on paper tissue. If you find less than 5 lice, repeat the conditioner and fine tooth combing daily until all lice are gone. If you find more than 5 lice, use an insecticidal treatment. Remember to retreat in 7 days, and to use conditioner and fine tooth comb at least twice between treatments.

### **CONDITIONER AND FINE TOOTH COMB TECHNIQUE**

1. Apply conditioner to dry hair aiming to cover each hair from root to tip with a layer of conditioner.
2. Detangle the hair using an ordinary comb.
3. Immediately comb the hair with a fine tooth comb. The best comb for this are combs with cylindrical metal teeth, not flat teeth. However, plastic nit combs with conditioner are also very effective at detecting and removing climbers with conditioner, but far less effective for eggs.
4. Wipe the conditioner off the fine tooth comb onto a paper tissue and look for lice and eggs.
5. Repeat the combing for every part of the head at least 5 times.
6. Also examine the comb for lice and eggs.

### **HEAD LICE DETECTION KIT**

A head lice detection kit therefore consists of 4 things:



- Conditioner - white conditioner is best since the lice and eggs are easier to see
- A fine tooth comb - to comb out the lice stunned by the conditioner
- A normal comb - to detangle hair and make the fine tooth comb easier to use
- Paper tissue - white tissues are best since the lice and eggs are easier to see.

### **Why use conditioner in a detection kit?**

Conditioner stuns head lice! The stunning effect seems to last about 20 minutes. After this time most lice are active again. Use conditioner on hair to increase the rate of detection. Applying conditioner to dry hair is best, but it will work on wet hair also. Older kids can even use the conditioner and nit comb technique in the shower as part of their normal hair care. If they do this at least once a week, newly invaded lice will be detected and removed before they have time to lay many eggs. Reinfection will be controlled.

Professor Rick Speare, Anton Breinl Centre for Public Health & Tropical Medicine, James Cook University  
Phone: 07 4781 5959; Fax: 07 4781 5254; Email: richard.speare@jcu.edu.au

Head Lice Information Sheet - <http://www.jcu.edu.au/school/phtm/PHTM/hlice/hlinfo1.htm>