

Lice infestation

Lice infestation has nothing to do with a lack of cleanliness. The cause is rather close contact between humans, mainly from "hair to hair", in particular in communal facilities for children and young people.

Parents are obliged to inform the communal facility their child attends about any lice infestation they have observed.

The quick recognition and treatment of lice infestation and giving information on it are the prerequisites for successful prevention and tackling the infestation in the facility. The parents/guardians should also confirm that their child has been treated.

A doctor's note confirming the success of the treatment is not necessary for the child to attend school again.

Symptoms

The head lice bites (in general every 4-6 hours) can lead to red, welt-shaped papules and itching with corresponding scratching and crust formation. Furthermore, a swelling of the regional lymph nodes could occur.

Treatment

Upon determination/diagnosis of lice, **immediate treatment** is necessary.

1. Treatment with a **suitable remedy/insecticide** (from the chemist's), e.g. NYDA and subsequent wet combing through the hair with conditioner and a **nit comb**.

After the treatment the child may attend school/Kindergarten again after 24 hours. An examination by the school nurse is necessary before your child can return to school/Kindergarten.

2. On day 5 the wet hair should be combed through again in order to remove new larvae before they become mobile.

3. Since head lice remedies do not reliably kill all eggs and depending on the remedies and their application larvae can appear again after the **first treatment**, it is imperative that a **repeat treatment** with the head lice remedy takes place within a tight timeframe (**ideal: day 9 or 10**).

This tight timeframe is necessary since larvae can still appear up to 7 or 8 days and from the 11th day new lice can lay new eggs. **Possible errors** in the treatment that favour the survival of not only the eggs but also larvae are:

- too short application time
- not enough remedy applied
- uneven distribution of the remedy
- thinning out the remedy too much on the dripping wet hair
- not repeating the treatment

4. Checks on day 13 and 17 by combing through wet hair.

Hygiene measures in household, Kindergarten and day-care centre, etc.

Since head lice only get their nourishment and can breed on the human head, cleaning and other measures play a subordinate role and serve as a preventative measure to interrupt possible transmission processes:

- Combs, hair brushes, hair slides and hair bands should be cleaned in a hot soap solution
- Pyjamas and bedding, towels and underwear should be changed
- Hats, scarves and other objects head lice could have got into should be packed in a plastic bag and stored for 3 days. Insecticide sprays are not necessary.

That these measures merely supplement the examination and treatment of the people close to the carrier of head lice first recognised results from the fact that head lice have to suck blood several times a day in order to not dry out and that they die out without nourishment after 55 hours at the latest.

Source: information and recommendations are taken from the RKI-Ratgeber (guidebook).