



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

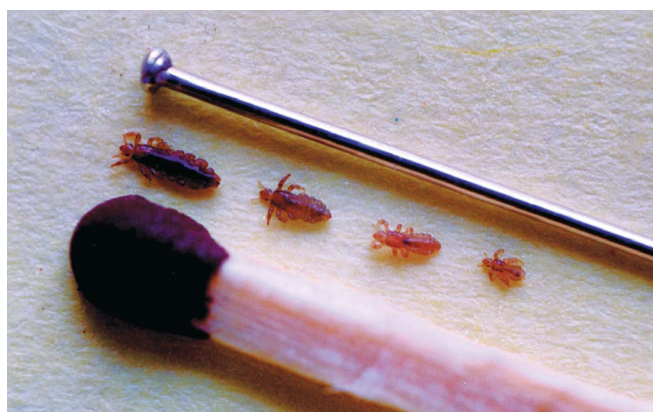
# Head lice

## Fact sheet

[www.cymru.gov.uk](http://www.cymru.gov.uk)

### What are head lice?

- Head lice are small insects (no larger than a sesame seed when fully grown) with moving legs. They live very close to the scalp.
- Nits are not the same as lice. They are the egg cases which stick to the hair, and look like specks of dandruff.
- You only have head lice if you find a moving louse (not a nit). Your head does not have to be itchy to have head lice.



### How do you get head lice?

- Because of children's play activity and close contact, head lice are usually found on children, but can also spread to adults.
- Head lice are caught from close family and friends in the home and community, as well as at school.
- Head lice live in all types of hair – dirty or clean, short or long.
- Head lice walk from one head to another, when heads are close together – they do not fly, jump or swim.

### How can you prevent head lice?

- Regular brushing and combing of the hair will help to spot lice early.
- The best way to stop the spread of head lice is for families to check their heads by regular wet combing using detector comb.
- Human head lice are not found on animals or household pets and are not transmitted from pets to humans.



### How do you treat head lice?

#### Do not treat unless you are sure you have found a moving louse.

1. Check and treat all infected members of the family.
2. Ask your GP or Pharmacist which head lice treatment to use. Creme rinses and shampoos are not thought effective and are therefore not recommended. The Pharmacist can advise on any evidence of resistance to treatment and therefore the most appropriate treatment to purchase. Also, the Pharmacist can advise on treatments suitable for people with asthma and other respiratory conditions.
3. Always read and follow the instructions in the treatment pack.
4. Apply the treatment carefully.



### Where can you go for further help and advice?

Contact the Pharmacist, Health Protection Nurse, School Health Nurse or GP.

### Further information can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/protection/communicabledisease/publications/headlice/?lang=en>