

The aim of the Poplar Grove Practice is to provide a high standard of holistic primary care to our entitled patients by working together as a cohesive multi-disciplinary team.

Our commitment to you, our patients, is to provide you with the highest possible standard of medical care with an efficiently run and friendly service. You will be treated as an individual with dignity, courtesy and respect at all times, irrespective of your ethnic origin, religious belief, sex or sexuality, personal attributes or the nature of your health problems. We expect to be treated in the same way.



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POPLAR GROVE
P R A C T I C E

Patient Information Leaflet

Head Lice

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What are head lice and nits?

Head lice are tiny grey/brown insects. They are about the size of a sesame seed (the seeds on burger buns). Head lice cling to hairs but stay close to the scalp which they feed off. Head lice lay eggs which hatch after 7 to 10 days. It takes about 7 to 10 days for a newly hatched louse to grow into an adult and start to lay eggs.

Nits are the empty yellow-white eggshells which are left when the lice hatch. Nits look like dandruff but stick strongly to hair. Unlike dandruff, you cannot easily brush out nits.

Who gets head lice?

Head lice are common in children but can affect anyone of any age. They are not a sign of dirty hair or poor hygiene. Close hair-to-hair contact is usually needed to pass lice on. Head lice cannot jump or fly but walk from one head to another. They soon die when away from hair, and do not live in clothes, bedding, etc. Most head lice infections are caught from family or close friends who are not aware that they have head lice.

How can you tell if you have head lice?

Head lice are difficult to find just by looking in the hair. If you suspect that you (or your child) have head lice, it is best to comb through the hair with a detection comb. Some people advise that you do this to children's hair regularly, about once a week. This may not always be necessary but can be helpful if people you are in contact with have head lice, or if it is a recurring problem.

Detection combing: wet hair method

This will take 5-15 minutes to check each head, depending on hair length and thickness. It is also used as a treatment for head lice - see later.

- Wash the hair in the normal way with ordinary shampoo.
- Rinse out the shampoo and put on lots of ordinary conditioner.
- Comb the hair with a normal comb to get rid of tangles.
- When the hair is untangled switch to a detection comb. This is a special fine-toothed comb. (The teeth of normal combs are too far apart and the teeth of 'nit combs' are too close together.) Most pharmacies stock detection combs.
- Slot the teeth of the detection comb into the hair at the roots so it is touching the scalp.
- Draw the detection comb through to the tips of the hair.
- Make sure that all parts of the hair are combed by working around the head.
- Check the comb for lice after each stroke. A magnifying glass may help.
- If you see any lice, clean the comb by wiping it on a tissue or rinse it before the next stroke.
- After the whole head has been combed, rinse out the conditioner.
- Repeat the combing procedure in the wet hair to check for any lice that might have been missed the first time.

Do family and friends need treatment?

Only if they have head lice. All people who live in the same home and other close head-to-head contacts of the previous 4-6 weeks should be advised to look for lice. These people should only be treated if live head lice are found. They do not need 'in case' treatment. All people with head lice in the same house should be treated at the same time. This stops lice being passed around again.

What about school?

Children with head lice should carry on going to school. Contrary to popular belief, head lice do not spread quickly through schools. Alarming head lice letters from schools are usually unhelpful. You need close head-to-head contact to pass lice on to others. Young children who play closely together may pass lice on. If your child has head lice, a common-sense approach is to tell the parents of their close friends to look out for lice in their children.

Can head lice be prevented?

There is no good way of preventing head lice. Lice repellent sprays do not work very well. If you do detection combing of children's hair every week or so, you will detect head lice soon after they have affected the hair. You can then start treatment quickly and reduce the risk of passing them on to others.

Some other points about head lice

Use an anti-lice treatment only when you are sure that you have, or your child has, head lice. Do not use them to prevent head lice.

A common reason for head lice to recur in one person is because family and close friends are not checked for head lice. The treated person may then get head lice back again from untreated family or friends.

After treatment and when the lice have gone, it may take 2-3 weeks for the itch to go fully.

Nits may remain after lice have gone. They are empty eggshells and stick strongly to hair. They will eventually fall out. If you prefer, a fine-toothed 'nit comb' can remove them