



National Bug Busting Day aims to encourage families to check their children for head lice and their eggs (nits) to help reduce the potential to spread via classrooms. Head lice can affect anyone at any age, but most frequently children between 4 and 11. Although they're not dangerous, they can cause irritation and distress. Because you can't easily spot head lice and nits, combing wet hair with a special comb helps remove live headlice and catch nits early and remove them before they hatch and make their way to other people. **This method avoids harsh insecticides that lice may be resistant to and can help prevent outbreaks in schools.** The National Bug Busting Day campaign encourages schools across the U.K. to choose specific days to focus on head lice education and ask families to thoroughly check their child's hair for head lice and nits.

Facts about head lice

- The eggs of head lice (nits) usually take 7 to 10 days to hatch.
- Live eggs and head lice are not easily spotted on the head.
- Some head lice have become resistant to some chemical insecticide treatments.
- Close contact is enough to catch head lice, head-to-head contact does not have to be prolonged to catch lice
- Head lice are a community problem. About 20% of cases are amongst people over 16 or under 4 years old.
- Shampoos are generally not recommended because they are diluted too much and have an insufficient contact time to kill eggs.
- If a live head louse is found, wet combing is recommended to avoid the use of insecticides — this is the systematic combing of wet conditioned hair with a louse detection comb to remove head lice.

Head lice and nits

Head lice and nits are very common in young children and their families. They do not have anything to do with dirty hair and are picked up by head-to-head contact.

Check if it's head lice



Head lice are small insects, up to 3mm long. They can be difficult to spot in your hair.



Head lice eggs (nits) are brown or white (empty shells) and attached to the hair.

Head lice can make your head feel:

- Itchy
- like something is moving in your hair

The only way to be sure someone has head lice is by finding live lice.

You can do this by combing their hair with a special fine-toothed comb (detection comb). You can buy these online or at pharmacies.

How to get rid of head lice

Treat head lice as soon as you spot them. You can treat head lice without seeing a GP.

You should check everyone in the house and start treating anyone who has head lice on the same day.

There's no need to keep your child off school if they have head lice.

Wet combing

Lice and nits can be removed by wet combing.

You can buy a special fine-toothed comb (detection comb) online or from pharmacies to remove head lice and nits.

There may be instructions on the pack, but usually you:

- wash hair with ordinary shampoo
- apply lots of conditioner (any conditioner will do)

- comb the whole head of hair, from the roots to the ends. It usually takes about 10 minutes to comb short hair, and 20 to 30 minutes for long, frizzy or curly hair.
- **Do wet combing on days 1, 5, 9 and 13 to catch any newly hatched head lice. Check again that everyone's hair is free of lice on day 17.**

Medicated lotions and sprays

If wet combing has not worked or is not suitable, you could try a medicated lotion or spray. These kill head lice in all types of hair, and you can buy them from pharmacies, supermarkets or online.

Head lice should die within a day. Some lotions and sprays come with a comb to remove dead lice and eggs.

Some treatments need to be repeated after a week to kill any newly hatched lice.

Check the pack to see if they're OK for you or your child and how to use them.

If lotions or sprays do not work, speak to a pharmacist about other treatments.

Some treatments are not recommended because they're unlikely to work.

For example:

- products containing permethrin
- head lice "repellents"
- electric combs for head lice
- tree and plant oil treatments, such as tea tree oil, eucalyptus oil and lavender oil herbal remedies

You cannot prevent head lice.

There's nothing you can do to prevent head lice.

You can help stop them spreading by wet or dry combing regularly to catch them early.

Do not use medicated lotions and sprays to prevent head lice. They can irritate the scalp.

There's no need for children to stay off school or to wash laundry on a hot wash.

Information:

The charity Community Hygiene Concern has a [video about wet combing for head lice](#).

Annual National Bug Busting Days: 31st January, 15th June, 31st October

How to take part in Bury Bug Busting Day

- Schools can order kits put together by [Community Hygiene Concern \(CHC\)](#) that contain specialised combs, instructions, and informational booklets. The CHC encourages a "whole-school approach," so that the entire school community can benefit from a comprehensive attack on head lice.
- **Encourage parents/carers to participate in Bury Bug Busting Day** by doing a thorough check with a bug-busting comb on their family and teach your pupils about how lice spread and what activities to avoid.
- **Educate yourself about head lice.** Lice are common, but there are simple ways to prevent or eradicate them. Learn about the risk factors and preventive measures so you and your pupils can stay safe from head lice.
- **Learn how to prevent head lice.** Keeping your space clean, vacuuming thoroughly, and washing fabrics frequently can help prevent outbreaks and keep lice from breeding and spreading.

Further information and resources

1. **NHS Advice-** [Head-lice-and-nits/nhs](#)

2. **Community Hygiene Concern (CHC)-** <https://www.chc.org/about-us/>

The CHC developed and promotes the Bug Busting wet combing to support the conversion of family anxiety about head lice into proactive prevention. Information on how to get a bug busting kit and how to treat head lice successfully can be found on the site.

3. **The Bug Buster Kit is the first Head Lice Device-** <https://www.chc.org/>

Approved for NHS prescription. Free for children diagnosed with lice. Ask a pharmacist, health visitor, school or practice nurse, or GP.

The Bug Buster® kit has been evaluated in randomized controlled trials, and it is available on the NHS. Other nit combs listed in the Drug Tariff include Nitty Gritty NitFree comb®, Nitcomb-S1®, Nitcomb-M2® and Portia® head louse comb

4. **Head Lice Management (NICE)-** <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/head-lice/management/>

For advice around infection prevention and control measures, the Bury Council IPC team can be reached on Tel: 0161 253 6900 (Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm) or by email, infectionprevention@bury.gov.uk