

Head Lice – Detection

What is Detection Combing ?

Detection Combing is an organized examination of the hair, from the scalp outwards, to find head lice. Finding lice by parting the hair and looking at the scalp is not particularly efficient and likely to miss many infestations.

How Do I Do Detection Combing?

You need:

1. *Plastic* fine-toothed comb. Available in most Drug Stores. Many combs sold as louse detection and removal combs are unsuitable for the purpose. Combs with flat-faced, parallel-sided teeth less than 0.3mm apart are appropriate. Metal combs are harsh and may pull hair out.
2. Good lighting
3. Ordinary comb

Steps

- Wash the hair well and then dry it with a towel. The hair should be damp. Detection combing dry hair can lead to static in the hair and lice can be repelled from the comb into the air as the comb is withdrawn from the hair.
- Make sure there is good light. Daylight is best.
- Comb the hair with an ordinary comb.
- Start with the teeth of the fine-toothed comb touching the skin of the scalp at the top of the head. Keep the comb in contact with the scalp as long as possible, draw the comb carefully towards the edge of the hair.
- Look carefully at the teeth of the comb in good light.
- Wipe the fine-toothed comb off on white tissue (like Kleenex or paper towel) to see any lice that may be caught in the comb
- Repeat the combing over and over again from the top of the head to the edge of the hair in all directions, working round the head.
- Do this for several minutes. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to do it properly for each head.
- If there are head lice, you will find one or more lice on the teeth of the comb.
- Head lice are little insects with moving legs. They are often not much bigger than a pin head, but may be as big as a sesame seed (the seeds on burger buns).
- When you have finished clean the comb under the tap. A nail brush helps to do this. Put the tissue you used to clean the comb in the garbage

- If you find something and aren't sure what it is, stick it on a piece of paper with clear sticky tape and show it to your public health nurse or family doctor. There may be other things in the hair that are not lice.

Notes

For a demonstration on detection combing: www.youtube.com/watch?v=je-cWdTrhFQ

If you need help and advice, ask your local Public Health Nurse.

Don't treat unless you are sure that you have found a living, moving louse.



Head louse



Louse egg (nit) on hair

The head louse is about the size of a sesame seed.
The head louse and the nit in this picture have been enlarged approximately 100 times

For more information contact:

**Your local Public Health Office
or your Physician
or
HealthLink Alberta 1-866-408-5465**