

## Insecticide Treatment for Head Lice

There are three groups of insecticide (i.e. permethrin, pyrethrin and malathion) which have been shown to be effective and safe for treatment of head lice. Some other treatments may not have been properly tested and may be ineffective, expensive or even unsafe. Check the product labels for active ingredients.

**WARNING – to avoid adverse reactions the following people should not routinely use insecticide head lice treatments:**

- babies under 6 months.
- people with asthma, epilepsy, insecticide allergies, scalp conditions or very sensitive skin.
- women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.

**People who cannot use insecticides** should use the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment instead (see previous page).

### Some key points to remember about insecticides:

1. **No insecticide is guaranteed to kill all eggs.** Eggs which are not killed or removed manually will hatch 7-10 days after being laid. The hatchlings should be combed out daily using hair conditioner as they may be transferred to other children. Hatchlings will mature after about one week and start laying more eggs, continuing the cycle.
2. **Following insecticide treatment, remove as many remaining eggs as possible with your fingernails.** Use a magnifying glass in strong light, and concentrate on 'live' eggs, which are found within 1 cm of the scalp.
3. **If insecticide alone is used then treatment should be applied on Day 1, Day 7 and Day 14** to kill any hatchlings before they mature and lay more eggs. Otherwise, if the hair is combed daily with hair conditioner for 10 days to remove the hatchlings, then the second and third insecticide treatments can be omitted.
4. **To prevent skin irritation,** do not repeat insecticide treatment more than 3 times, one week apart.
5. **Insecticide resistance.** Head lice that are resistant to an insecticide will still be alive the morning after the insecticide treatment, providing the insecticide was properly applied. If this happens, you should thoroughly wash out the first insecticide and retreat the same day with another insecticide from a different group (i.e. permethrin, pyrethrin or malathion), not just a different brand of the same insecticide.  
**Alternatively, change to the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment instead.**

### How to use insecticide treatment:

- Rinse out any hair conditioner before using the insecticide as it may inactivate the insecticide.
- Lift the hair in sections, and saturate it with insecticide, combing through with an ordinary comb from the scalp to the ends of the hair. Work from the back of the head to the front. Pay particular attention to treating behind the ears, at the nape of the neck and close to the scalp. Leave the insecticide on for the time recommended on the label, then wash out. Section the hair again and comb through with a metal fine tooth 'nit' comb to remove dead lice and eggs.
- Check that the head lice are actually dead. Do this straight after the recommended treatment time and again the **next morning**. It may take a few hours for all the lice to die. **Remember**, if any head lice are found still alive the next morning, re-treat the hair the same day with another insecticide from a different group (i.e. permethrin, pyrethrin or malathion), not just a different brand of the same insecticide.  
**Alternatively, change to the 10 Day Hair Conditioner Treatment.**
- Check all other household members for head lice infestation using the hair conditioner method described on page 3.