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## Wet Combing Treatment for Head Lice

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Wet combing treatment (often called 'bug-busting') is a way of removing head lice from the head without using anti-lice lotions or sprays to kill them.

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### How do you do wet combing treatment?

Wet combing is a way of removing head lice without having to use a lotion to kill them. Briefly, the method is similar to wet combing (detection combing) described earlier. But, you need to do this several times, four days apart. You will need to do this on every member of the household who has head lice.

It takes up to an hour to do a wet combing session properly. You need the correct toothed detection comb as described earlier. Only one kit is needed for a family, as it is washable and reusable.

- 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 the detection comb.
- 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 you have combed the whole head, rinse out the conditioner.

You need to do the above routine **at least** four times, every four days. The number of sessions required depends on the last time you see lice:

- The first combing session should remove all hatched head lice but does not remove eggs. Therefore lice that hatch from eggs after the first session may still be present.
- Subsequent sessions clear newly hatched lice. Keep doing the combing sessions every four days until you have had three sessions where no lice are detected.
- Once you have had three sessions where you do not see any lice, it usually means that you are then free of lice.

The downside to this treatment is that it is time-consuming. Fuller details of wet combing (bug busting) treatment can be obtained from: Community Hygiene Concern (contact details are under 'Further help & information', below).

### What about family and friends?

All people in the same home, and other close 'head-to-head' contacts of the previous 4-6 weeks should be contacted. Tell them to look for lice and treat if necessary. (It used to be advised to treat all close contacts even if they had no symptoms. This has changed to just treating people who have head lice.) All people with head lice in the same home should be treated at the same time. This stops lice being passed around again.

### Further reading & references

- [Head lice](#); NICE CKS, March 2010





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