

# Breastfeeding and Medication



## Head lice treatment and Breastfeeding

Head lice (the live insects) and nits (head lice eggs) are commonly seen in school age children, particularly toddlers who like to be close to their friends. Unfortunately for parents, grandparents and the wider family, they are also easily spread by head to head contact, which we all enjoy with children!

Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene and they actually prefer clean and shiny hair. Symptoms usually start with scratching the head and sometimes it feels like something is moving. The easiest place to find live head lice is behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.

### Wet combing

It is possible to remove head lice without chemicals, but it takes time and patience. Wash the hair and leave in conditioner. Comb the hair with a fine comb thoroughly. It can take up to 30 minutes to do this so an ideal time is when the child is engrossed in a favourite TV programme. It is necessary to repeat this at least every 4 days (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-lice-and-nits/>).

The charity Community Hygiene Concern has a video about wet combing for head lice.

<https://www.chc.org/for-parents-2/>

### Medicated lotions and sprays

These are available from pharmacies and supermarkets so there is no need to consult a doctor or practice nurse. Medicated products to treat head lice can be used by breastfeeding mothers to treat themselves and their children. If there are lots of heads to treat it can be sensible to have an open window as the smell can be strong. There is no evidence of absorption of the products into breastmilk through the skin, hair or scalp.

Shampoos are diluted too much in use to be effective. A contact time of 8–12 hours or overnight treatment is recommended for lotions and liquids. A 2 hour treatment is not sufficient to kill eggs.

In general, a course of treatment for head lice should be 2 applications of product 7 days apart to kill lice emerging from any eggs that survive the first application. All affected household members

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should be treated simultaneously. All friends and school should be advised so that all contacts can be treated to prevent reinfection. Regular wet combing to check hair of primary school age children is good practice (with the voice of experience as a mum and grandma!)

Products include ( not exclusive):

*Dimeticone*: Hedrin™, Lynclear Lotion™

*Osmolone*: Lynclear™

*Isopropyl Myristate*: Vamousse

*Permethrin*: Lynclear cream rinse™

Cyclomethicone, Isopropyl Myristate: Full Marks™

Malathion: Derbac M™

### References

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