# Information sheet: treatment of head lice<sup>1</sup>

### Head lice - what's behind them?

- Head lice live only on human heads and feed on human blood
- The female lays about 5 eggs daily, the size of a grain of sand
- The louse glues the eggs to the hair near its root with a water-insoluble glue
- Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene

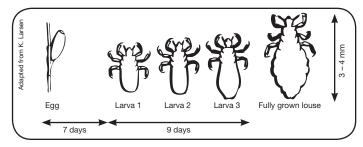


Fig. From an egg to a fully grown head louse

### Where are head lice found?

- Only in scalp hair
- They are spread only by direct hair contact
- Head lice are not spread via objects or animals
- Head lice can neither jump nor fly

### Have I head lice?

- Head lice are hard to identify with the naked eye
- Infestation with head lice is often associated with an itchy scalp
- Head lice are definitely present if you find live head lice
- It is possible that you have head lice if you find eggs/nits<sup>2</sup>
- Check all family members

## How do you find head lice?

- 1. Wet the hair
- 2. Spread cream rinse or conditioner generously over the wet hair
- 3. Comb through the hair (with a brush or comb) to untangle it
- 4. Comb through the hair strand by strand from the roots to the tips with a fine comb



Fig. Combing through wet hair with a fine comb: from the roots to the tips of the hair

- 5. After each combing, wipe the fine comb on white paper (e.g. kitchen paper) to see the head lice and eggs
- 6. Rinse hair thoroughly

These recommendations were developed for Switzerland and discussed at a conference of head louse experts in June 2010. They aim to optimise and/or improve the efficacy and success of head louse treatment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Lice hatch from eggs. The empty egg case is called a «nit».

### Head lice - what now?

- If you have found live lice when checking, you should treat them immediately
- Use a special product against head lice and follow the instructions in the pack.
  If you have any questions or require further information, ask the trained staff in your pharmacy or drugstore.
- If you comb the hair with the fine comb twice a week between the treatments, you can: a) check that the treatment was successful
  - b) halt re-infestation

### Eggs - what now?

- If you have found only eggs and/or nits² on checking, you should search the hair for live lice twice a week for 2 weeks
- If you find live head lice, treat them immediately (see "Head lice what now?")

#### **IMORTANT!**

- Always inform immediate contacts of a head louse infestation: school, crèche,
  nursery school, family, friends etc. this is the only way to stop it from spreading further
- Check all family members for lice with a fine comb once a week
- Place combs, brushes and hair slides in hot soapy water (60° C) for 10 minutes
- Tie long hair together
- Further measures are not necessary, concentrate on the head

Notes / additions:	If you have any questions or require further information please contact: