

Cheapskates Journal's Favourite Nit & Head Lice Treatments

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Head lice are an epidemic – and there is no single treatment that is guaranteed to kill them the first time. The secret to success is patience, consistent treatment and diligence in treating and checking for them.

Our school recommends KP24, but at \$12.95/100ml bottle it's expensive. And it's a chemical treatment, not something I want to use on a repeatedly on my children. So, I thought I'd share some alternatives with you. They are inexpensive, safe and they do work.

Solution No. 1: Plain old hair conditioner – Cost \$2

Use the cheapest conditioner you can find - \$2 a litre from NQR is perfect! Cover dry hair with a thick layer of conditioner, rub through and then hide it under a shower cap. The shower cap isn't necessary, but it keeps the conditioner out of eyes and off clothing and furniture. Leave for at least 30 minutes and then sit with a towel across your lap and the child in front of you. Use a fine tooth comb to comb every strand of hair, wiping on the towel after every length. When you have combed the hair thoroughly, shampoo and condition as normal. Repeat this treatment every second day until there are no headlice found for at least ten consecutive days.

Solution No. 2: Ti Tree Shampoo and Conditioner – Cost approx. 94 cents per treatment

Head lice don't like ti tree, so using a ti tree shampoo and conditioner will not get rid of them, it will help to repel others. The problem with this one is that these products are quite pricey - \$4.70 for a 200ml bottle of Thursday Island Tea Tree Shampoo and the same for the conditioner, which won't last long. So, why not buy a bottle of Tea tree oil, at \$3.60 for a 10ml bottle of pure tea tree oil, and use one or two drops added to your regular shampoo

and conditioner? A bottle will last for a very long time.

Solution No. 3: Tea Tree Spray

Head lice really don't like tea tree oil, so making up a spray of tea tree oil and water and using it as a hair spray each day helps to deter them and to any that are present. Using a mix of 1 part ti tree oil to 10 parts water is strong enough to work, without burning or irritating a little scalp.

Solution No. 4: Vinegar

Vinegar breaks down the sticky stuff that adheres the eggs to the strands of hair. Lice don't like vinegar either. So here you have two treatments:

- a. use vinegar as a rinse after shampooing, and then comb with the lice comb
- b. add a splash of vinegar to a spray bottle of water and use as hair spray every morning after hair has been done

Solution No. 5: Brushes and combs, hair tidies etc

Soaking brushes, combs, hair clips etc in boiling water for at least 30 minutes will kill any lice or nits that are caught in them. Doing this religiously every week will help to control any further outbreaks. Lice generally only live for 6 – 24 hours once they are off the human scalp, but eggs take up to 10 days to hatch and if they hatch in a hairbrush and then get lucky and are put straight onto a nice, clean head the cycle will continue.

Solution No. 6: Weekly head checks

It might seem like a waste of time, but weekly checks of head and hair are essential in keeping head lice and nits at bay. It only takes a few minutes to go over a child's head and if it's clear – great! If you find any evidence of lice or nits, you can start a treatment routine immediately and keep something that can quite easily become an epidemic under control, eventually stamping it out.

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