

Combing: a Safe, Non-Toxic Method of Lice Control

Combing is the oldest method of lice control. It is completely safe. When done properly, it takes time and requires patience on the part of parent and child. You can completely avoid insecticide shampoos/rinses if you comb the hair to remove lice and nits, but you must be diligent. Even if you use an insecticidal shampoo, combing is the only way to remove nits from the hair.

If your time is limited, it is much more important to spend the time combing your child's hair than washing clothes/linens and vacuuming the house.



How to Use a Lice Comb

1. Getting ready. First, purchase a metal lice comb. The tines of a specially designed nit comb are narrower than the eggs. Do not use plastic combs provided with some pesticidal shampoos; they are flexible and can allow nits and lice to pass through. If you cannot find a metal lice comb, ask your pharmacist to order one. Other items that you will need are:

- comb and/or brush
- bobby pins or hair clips (for long hair)
- a large towel to place around the child's shoulders during combing
- box of facial tissue
- bowl of water with a little dishwashing liquid added.

Combing should be done in a well lit area. Seat the child so her/his head is just below eye level. It also might be a good idea to have something fun to entertain the child that does not require much physical activity. Consider reading, modeling clay, coloring or videos.

2. Prepare the hair. Cover the child's hair with salad or olive oil, or a hair conditioning product. The oil or conditioner prevents the hair from tangling, prevents the hair from drying out and makes it easy to use the lice

comb. Use a regular comb or brush to remove the snarls.

3. Combing. Separate a mass of hair that is slightly wider than the width of the metal lice comb and about 3/4 inch in the other direction. It is important to separate the hair into small sections so you can more easily see lice and nits.

Hold the mass of hair with one hand. With the other hand, hold the lice comb in a slanting position with the teeth toward the head.

Insert the comb as close to the scalp as possible since the eggs are first laid within 1/2 inch of the scalp. Gently pull the comb slowly through the hair several times. Check the hair carefully.

Comb one section at a time and check each section again. Pin the hair out of the way curling it flat against the head. Whenever you comb out nits or live lice, dunk the comb in the soapy water. Make sure the comb is clean before you use it on the hair again. Frequently remove hair and other debris from the comb with a tissue. When the bowl is full, flush its

contents down the toilet and refill the bowl with soapy water. Continue combing.

After Combing

Flush the contents of the bowl down the toilet. Shampoo the hair at least twice to remove the oil/conditioner. When the hair is dry, check for stray nits and remove those hairs individually with a pair of small, pointed scissors. (SC)

Environmental Focus



Celebrate America Recycles Day

November 15, 2001

The average American generates nearly 1,500 pounds of trash each year. That's over 200 million tons of waste produced annually in the United States.

Because more Americans are recycling, the nation's recycling rate is over 28 percent. This means the steel and aluminum cans, glass jars, paper, plastic and even rechargeable batteries we place at the curb or at drop-off sites, are making a real difference in reducing our nation's waste.

November 15 is America Recycles Day. Millions of Americans will commit to keep recycling. What can you do? Recycle, but remember to close the loop by purchasing recycled-content products. It's easy to do. Over 90 percent of all Americans have access to recycled-content products. Whether at the



grocery store, at the office or at home, recycled products are everywhere. Tires are made into soaker hoses, carpeting and fleece jackets. T-shirts, benches and shoes are made from soda bottles.

All you have to do is read the label. You'll find loads of recycled-content products.

In Lincoln, 54 percent of aluminum cans recycled are made into other aluminum cans, 100 percent of cereal boxes and 33 percent of cardboard recycled are made into recycled products. Twenty-eight percent of recycled steel cans and 27 percent of glass are reused in products.

So...on Nov. 15, join our nation in the recycling effort. Buy recycled products. For more information, visit www.americarecyclesday.org (ALH)

Head Lice Resources Available from the Extension Office

• **Head Lice Management Fact Sheet** — Detailed information on head lice treatment, combing and management. An important resource for educators, health professionals, child care providers and cosmetologists. (free)

• **Fact Sheet Quick Guide to Removing Head Lice Safely** — Basic information on head lice management. Designed for families. English and Spanish versions. (free)

• **The award-winning**

video, "Removing Head Lice Safely" — This video is available for purchase from the extension office (\$10 plus shipping and handling). Many Lancaster County schools have this video in their buildings. Check with your school nurse. The video is currently showing on 5CityTV (Cable Channel 5) in Lincoln. Check program guide for viewing times.

Visit the Lancaster County Extension Web site at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/>

lice.htm. You have instant access to all of the Fact Sheets listed above and terrific photos of lice, nits and combing techniques. In addition, you can view the video "Removing Head Lice Safely" at your convenience, on the web site. This on-line video streaming was made possible by the folks at 5CityTV.

Contact the Lancaster County Extension office at 441-7180, for more information. (SC)

Asthma and Indoor Air Contaminants

Asthma is a serious lung disease that has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. It kills more than 5,000 people each year and costs about \$12.5 billion in medical care and lost time from school and work. It is the leading cause of school absenteeism in the U.S. It is estimated that 14 million Americans have this disease; of these five million are children.

Asthma is an allergic reaction that causes the sides of the airways in the lungs to become inflamed or swollen. Symptoms are coughing, wheezing (a whistling noise when you breathe), chest tightness and shortness of breath.

Asthma can be triggered by air contaminants that are indoors or are carried inside from outdoors. Outdoor particles come into your home through windows, doors and heating systems. Some contaminants in

the air that trigger asthma are:

- Tobacco and wood smoke.
- Perfume, hair spray, paint or solvent odors or fumes.
- Pollen and mold spores.
- Animal allergens such as animal dander from pets, dust mites, cockroaches, mice.

People who have symptoms of asthma should avoid those triggers and may need to have a series of allergy tests to determine what those triggers are.

Here are some to help reduce exposure to some of the more common indoor air contaminants:

Tobacco Smoke: Smoking should not be allowed in the home of someone with asthma or allergies. Ask family members and friends to smoke outdoors and suggest they quit smoking. Avoid smoky restaurants and ask for non-smoking hotel rooms while traveling.

Wood Smoke: Wood smoke is a problem for children and

adults with asthma and allergies. Avoid wood stoves and fireplaces.

Strong Odors or Fumes: Perfume, room deodorizers, cleaning chemicals, paint and talcum powder should be avoided.

Indoor Mold: When humidity is high, mold can be a problem in bathrooms, kitchens, and basements. The basement, in particular, may need a dehumidifier. And remember, the water in the dehumidifier must be emptied and the container cleaned often to prevent forming mildew.

Pets: Almost all pets can cause allergies, including dogs and especially cats. Birds, hamsters and guinea pigs can also cause problems. In serious cases of asthma, pets may need to be removed from the home. If the pet stays in the home, keep it out of the bedroom of anyone with asthma or allergies. Weekly

pet baths may help cut down the amount of pet saliva and dander in the home.

Sometimes you hear certain breeds of cats or dogs are "non-allergenic." There really is no such thing as a "non-allergenic" cat or dog, especially if the pet leaves dander and saliva in the home. Goldfish and other tropical fish may be a good substitute.

Cockroaches and Dust Mites: Both of these are potent asthma triggers, so efforts must be made to eliminate or reduce these pests in the homes. The allergen trigger is from cast skins of cockroaches and dust mites that become part of house dust. Managing cockroaches and dust mites is not easy and can take a lot of work. Information on controlling these pests is found at: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/pest/bug.htm>.

The Bottom Line: Reduce or remove as many asthma and

allergy triggers from your home as possible. If possible, use air filters and air conditioners to make your home cleaner and more comfortable. Pay attention to the problem of dust mites and roaches. Vacuum cleaners stir up dust and allergens in the air. A vacuum cleaner with an air filter or a central vacuum cleaner with a collection bag outside the home may be of some value. Anyone with asthma or allergies should avoid vacuuming, although, if there is no other alternative, a dust mask may be helpful.

Website sources: American Lung Association website at www.lungusa.org/asthma/asthomecon.html and American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology at www.aaaai.org/public/publicedmat/advocate/default.stm. (BPO)