

## Rationale

Head lice are a common problem, particularly in school children aged 4-11. They're largely harmless, but can live in the hair for a long time if not treated and can be irritating and frustrating to deal with.

Live head lice can be treated by wet combing; chemical treatment is only recommended in exceptional circumstances and in these cases over the counter medicines can be purchased from a pharmacy.

## Recommendations for clinicians

- Provide the patient with a 'non-prescription' sheet or a patient information leaflet to promote education about self-limiting conditions suitable for self-care when appropriate.
- Advise patients on safe and effective self-care measures.
  - Treat everyone in the household for lice
  - Avoid head to head contact
  - Wet combing using a special fine-toothed comb with conditioner removes lice, combing from roots to ends. Repeat every few days for 2 weeks
  - If head lice or nits still present after 2 weeks, consult a pharmacist. They can recommend lotions or sprays.
  - Try not to scratch affected area
  - Treatment may be repeated if required
- Advise patients to seek medical attention and consider treatment with a prescription in the following circumstances:
  - Treatment failure

## Example of products available to buy over the counter\*

Dimeticone 4% - **Not licensed for under 6 months (~£12.00 for 150ml)**

Permethrin lotion 1% – **Not licensed for under 6 months (~£10.00 for 2 x 59ml)**

For further information see Self-care forum <http://www.selfcareforum.org/>, NHS UK <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>, Patient UK <https://patient.info/>

\*Prices correct at time of writing and are subject to change

