

## How to naturally get rid of head lice

### By Dr. Christine Sauer

Head lice are feared by children, siblings and parents. They cause itching, and the scratching that follows can lead to redness and dermatitis as well to infections of scalp and neck. The “ickyness” often causes anxiety and uproar in families. Still the health authorities classified it as nuisance and allow children with active head lice infections to stay in school or daycare, thus leading to even more widespread infections.

How do you know if you or your child have head lice?

The first sign is usually a persistent itch. When you look at the affected person’s hair up close, preferably behind the ears, close to the scalp, you may find little white nits (lice eggs firmly attached to the hair shaft). You know it is not dandruff when you can’t just brush it out with a normal hair brush or remove them with the fingers.

Most commonly used and sold products contain pyrethroid insecticides, which, although derived from natural substances found in chrysanthemums, have lost most of its effectiveness because most head lice in north America became resistant to it. Not only that, the safety of repeated and prolonged exposure in children is unclear. Newer chemical treatments are mostly very expensive and may be even more toxic to children, especially if used more than once.

Whatever method you decide to use, remember to repeat the application after 1 - 2 weeks to kill and remove lice that may have hatched from nits that were left on the hairs.

And to be safe, after each application: wash all bedding, pillows, stuffed animals and clothes (especially head coverings) that have come or may have come in contact with the affected person’s hair in soapy water as hot as the fabric allows. If possible, add a few drops of tea tree oil and a squirt of apple cider vinegar to your rinsing solution.

Always treat all family members, since pillows, stuffed animals, sofas, clothes etc. are often shared.

### What are the alternatives to pharmaceuticals?

Lesser known, but natural (and often cheaper) alternatives, which are in addition often more effective, are:

#### 1) Your hair dryer

Blast the affected person’s hair and scalp with your hair dryer on a lower setting (as hot as tolerated, but not so hot it burns!) for 30 min. Repeat every day for 1 week.

Gets rid of about half of lice and eggs each time.

## 2) **Diatomaceous earth:**

Diatomaceous earth (DE) is made from tiny fossilized water plants called diatoms. The diatoms are ground up to make a fine, chalky powder that's rich in minerals and toxic to insects. DE works because it absorbs fats from the insects' protective outer coating, drying them out, and killing them.

DE is non-toxic to humans, although you should be careful to avoid breathing in the dust, especially for a prolonged period. Here's how to safely use DE for lice treatment (according to Dr. Mercola):

- I. Place an old t-shirt upside down over the affected person's head so the collar forms a seal around the scalp.
- II. Apply DE to the affected person's hair, while being careful to keep the dust inside of the t-shirt "bag."
- III. Tie off the open end of the t-shirt and massage the DE into hair and scalp.
- IV. Allow it to sit overnight, then shampoo it out the next day.
- V. This should be followed by a thorough combing with an extra-fine comb. You may need to repeat the treatment once a week for three weeks.

## 3) **The combination method:** Tea tree oil, apple cider vinegar, salt and coconut oil, followed by the hair dryer

My combination method will kill nearly all head lice overnight. Here's how to do it:

- I. Mix 1 teaspoon of tea tree oil, 1 ounce of natural shampoo and 3 teaspoons of coconut oil.
- II. Gently apply the mixture throughout your hair, and then cover it with a shower cap or towel. Leave it for 30 minutes, and then rinse out with warm water.
- III. Rinse with a mixture of ¼ cup apple cider vinegar, 1-2 Tbsp. Epsom salt and ¼ cup water, then apply coconut oil liberally on the scalp and hair. Leave overnight. (put shower cap or towel over it and use an old pillow and pillowcase or cover with extra towels)
- IV. In the morning, use a fine-tooth comb to comb out all remaining dead lice and eggs, then shampoo and rinse well.

Tea tree oil, apple cider vinegar, salt and coconut oil are all antimicrobial and will kill lice and most eggs.

Use a good mild tea tree oil shampoo every day to help repel lice from "jumping" on your or your child's hair and prevent a reinfection.

Note: If the scalp and skin have open wounds (are scratched sore), you may want to skip the apple cider vinegar and salt (because it will burn; especially in small children)