

COMBS FOR REMOVING LICE AND NITS.

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Combing out lice, louse eggs, and nits has been a major component of louse control in most countries for centuries. These practices were used less after the advent of insecticide based pharmaceutical products but both have come back into vogue in recent years. In the case of lice it was because of resistance and fears of insecticide toxicity. In the case of eggs and nits it was because of poor ovicidal activity and for cosmetic reasons. The advent of the “No Nit Policy” in the USA has been a major factor in modern combing.

A plethora of combs is available in most countries but do they work? This paper looks at the structure of combs; tooth shape, tooth width, material of construction, and colour for finding lice, and asks whether the shapes of combs and handles are likely to make the job easier or harder. It also asks the question about how good does a nit comb need to be to achieve its purpose. Experimental work suggests that many nits pass through without even touching the sides of some combs. So is this an area where the public is being cheated?