

Head lice: Accurate knowledge of the life-cycle

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is essential to achieve control

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Send response to
journal:

Re: [Head lice: Accurate
knowledge of the life-
cycle is essential to
achieve control](#)

We are concerned that, in common with numerous publications offering guidance on treatment, Sladden and Johnston, (1) give incorrect information on the duration of the egg stage of *Pediculus capitis*. Hatching may occur later than the seven days stated, to at least ten days post laying. This fact, which has important implications for treatment advice, was recorded by Buxton in 1947 in a masterly reference work on the lice which infest humans (2). We are not aware of any robust research which challenges this; indeed, our own investigations developing the Bug Busting wet combing method confirm that the incubation period often lasts ten days. It follows that two doses of a product that may not kill the egg, applied a week apart (i.e. on day 1 and 8) will not reliably eradicate an infestation because some lice may hatch after the second application.

The information provided by Sladden and Johnston about mechanical measures is also confused and misleading. Meinking and colleagues (3) did not report on wet combing, which is intended to comb out hatched lice, but on the unreliability of combing to remove eggs as an adjunctive after using insecticide treatment to kill lice. Bug Busting wet combing is a precise method using specific combs supplied with full instructions in a Bug Buster Kit. This product is reusable for detection and eradication. It works with ordinary shampoo and conditioner. No insecticide, synthetic or natural is involved. Combing sessions should be administered on days 1, 5, 9 and 13 to break the life-cycle on the basis of removing lice. At a fifth session, post day 13, no lice should be found, unless re-infestation has occurred during the Bug Busting period. Full-grown lice move between heads. The instructions teach users to distinguish this stage from the smaller nymphal stages. Although initially seeming to have less success than insecticide treatment, Bug Busting wet combing will retain or even increase its effectiveness as parents become more skilled in using the Bug Buster Kit (4). Louse resistance cannot occur and it is more economical than using two or more applications of formula per infestation. Only one Bug Buster Kit per family is required.

Community Hygiene Concern is a registered charity. Our work investigating mechanical methods of head louse detection and elimination is grant funded by the UK Department of Health and Community Fund. We supply the Bug Buster Kit (which is available on NHS prescription) on a non-profit making basis.

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Competing interests: Community Hygiene Concern is part-funded by sales of the Bug Buster Kit on a non-profit making basis.

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