

## The campaign against head lice

**The Norwegian Institute of Public Health urges all schools and kindergartens in Norway to participate in the national, half-yearly campaigns against head lice mounted every year in calendar weeks 10 and 35. We will be participating this week.**

The aim of the campaign is for all of Norway's school pupils and kindergarten children to be checked for head lice. It is very important that everyone at the school/kindergarten participates. In addition to the children and staff, all other family members should be checked for head lice during the campaign period. This reduces the risk of reinfestation and greatly reduces the number of outbreaks of head lice over time. If head lice are detected, there is no need to keep your child away from school/kindergarten, but treatment should be started as soon as possible.

Head lice are detected by combing the hair with a special fine-tooth comb (available from pharmacies). It is important to comb the hair through its whole length, with the teeth of the comb slotting into the hair at the roots with every stroke. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health recommends combing in wet hair. This is because the wet stops the lice moving so they can't escape. You can apply a conditioner to detangle the hair and make it easier to comb. Wipe the comb on kitchen paper or a towel after every stroke and check for lice. As soon as the lice have dried, they will start moving around. Some people prefer to do the combing in dry hair. If so, the person being combed should stand bending over a white towel or other white surface so head lice can easily be spotted falling out of the hair. But the main thing is that you do the combing.

If you detect head lice, there are several treatments for getting rid of them. You can 1) use a medicated lotion specially formulated for head lice (available from pharmacies), 2) detection-comb the hair frequently (daily for 14 days), or 3) cut the hair shorter than 0.5 cm. If using a medicated lotion, it is important to follow the pack leaflet instructions very carefully.

Head lice are not harmful, but can be very distressing. Head lice are caught from head-to-head contact and can affect anyone, regardless of age, hair type etc. The lice are soon weakened when they are gone from the head. This means there is no need to specially clean your home, furniture, pillows etc.

We hope that everyone with children at our school/kindergarten will support the campaign by joining our efforts to reduce future head lice outbreaks. Studies show that the best way of reducing outbreaks of head lice is to check for infestation frequently. In addition to the campaign period, try to comb your child's hair at least monthly, and ideally weekly.

For more information about head lice, see [www.fhi.no/lus](http://www.fhi.no/lus)