

Over-the-counter Medications

Many head lice medications are available "over-the-counter" without a prescription at a local drug store or pharmacy. Each over-the-counter product approved by the FDA for the treatment of head lice contains one of the following active ingredients. If crawling lice are still seen after a full course of treatment contact your health care provider.

1. **Pyrethrins** combined with piperonyl butoxide;
Brand name products: A-200*, Pronto*, R&C*, Rid*, Triple X*, Licide*

Pyrethrins are naturally occurring pyrethroid extracts from the chrysanthemum flower. Pyrethrins are safe and effective when used as directed. Pyrethrins can only kill live lice, not unhatched eggs (nits). A second treatment is recommended 9 to 10 days after the first treatment to kill any newly hatched lice before they can produce new eggs. Pyrethrins generally should not be used by persons who are allergic to chrysanthemums or ragweed. Pyrethrin is approved for use on children 2 years of age and older.

2. **Permethrin lotion, 1%**;
Brand name product: Nix*

Permethrin is a synthetic pyrethroid similar to naturally occurring pyrethrins. Permethrin lotion 1% is approved by the FDA for the treatment of head lice. Permethrin is safe and effective when used as directed. Permethrin kills live lice but not unhatched eggs. Permethrin may continue to kill newly hatched lice for several days after treatment. A second treatment often is necessary on day 9 to kill any newly hatched lice before they can produce new eggs. Permethrin is approved for use on children 2 months of age and older.

When treating head lice

1. Do not use extra amounts of any lice medication unless instructed to do so by your physician or pharmacist. The drugs used to treat lice are insecticides and can be dangerous if they are misused or overused.
2. All the medications listed above should be kept out of the eyes. If they get onto the eyes, they should be immediately flushed away.
3. Do not treat an infested person more than 2–3 times with the same medication if it does not seem to be working. This may be caused by using the medicine incorrectly or by resistance to the medicine. Always seek the advice of your health care provider if this should happen. He/she may recommend an alternative medication.
4. Do not use different head lice drugs at the same time unless instructed to do so by your physician or pharmacist.