

Head Lice Information Sheet

Head lice are six legged insects not much bigger than a pinhead or sesame seed. They are whitish or grey-brown in colour and they cannot fly, jump or swim. However, they can crawl. They feed off of the blood from the scalp. Nits are the empty egg cases. They live for up to thirty days and they spread through head to head contact.

They are not harmful but they are a nuisance and need treating as soon as you're aware of them.

Head lice are very common among primary school aged children. They like any type of hair: clean, dirty, long, short, straight or curly, and any colour - they are not fussy! Therefore, no stigma should be attached on finding them.

It is important to check the whole family's hair and anyone who has had close contact (extended family and friends). Regular detection is important and it is recommended that you check your child/children's hair weekly using the wet combing method. (Not everyone gets an itchy head.)



A head louse

Methods of Treatment

1. Chemical lotions;
2. Wet combing: this needs to be repeated every 3 - 4 days over a 2 week period to break the life cycle of the head louse (ideally 4 times in two weeks).

Wet combing method:

- Wash the hair as usual;
- Condition the hair and leave the conditioner in (get rid of any excess conditioner);
- Comb hair through with a wide toothed comb (if the hair is longer, dividing it into sections can help);
- Using a head louse detection comb, go through every part of the hair making sure you wipe the comb between each use with white tissue to detect if a louse is present (pay particular attention to the nape of the neck and around the ears. If hair is longer you can tip the head forward to check underneath, ensuring every area has been combed.);
- If head lice are found, repeat the process above every 3 - 4 days for 2 weeks. If no lice are found, repeat each week for regular detection purposes.

For further information or advice please contact the School Nurse via the school or look at the NHS choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>



Nits in the hair