

Advice on Head lice



Head louse infection is not primarily a problem of schools but of the wider community. It cannot be solved by the school, but the school can help the local community to deal with it.

Head lice are only transmitted by direct, prolonged, head-to-head contact.

Transmission of lice within the classroom is relatively rare. When it does occur, it is usually from a “best friend”.

Head lice will not be eradicated in the foreseeable future, but a sensible, informed approach, based on fact not mythology, will help to limit the problem.

At any one time, most schools will have children who have active infection with head lice. This is often between 0% and 5%, rarely more.

The perception by parents and staff, however, is often that there is a serious “outbreak” with many of the children infected. This is hardly ever the case.

The “outbreak” is often an outbreak of agitation and alarm, not of louse infection; a societal problem not a public health problem.

What we will do:

- Have a written protocol on the management of the head louse problem, based on advice.
- Send out a reminder on our weekly newsletter and advice to parents/carers if head lice are identified within school.
- Advise that the appropriate clinical advisors are the school nurse, the local pharmacist, the health visitor, and the general practitioner. Our school nurse is Karen Hirst-Tel: 01229 402624.
- Keep individual cases confidential.
- Have information and advice available on our website.

What we cannot do:

- Exclude children who have, or are thought to have, head lice.
- Have routine head inspections.

ADVICE

So what should I do?

The only thing that really gets rid of head lice is good old fashioned elbow grease.

- Buy a nit comb (they are available on prescription too)
- Buy the biggest bottle of the cheapest hair conditioner you can find and use the wet combing method.

What is the Wet Combing Method?

- This method is very safe. It is cheap and works well. All you need is your large bottle of hair conditioner, a nit comb and some time and patience.
- (It is best to ask someone to help you.)
- Wash the hair with your usual shampoo
- While the hair is wet, apply plenty of hair conditioner
- Comb the hair using a fine nit comb.
- Comb from the roots upwards
- Check the comb for lice and clear them away after each sweep
- Comb all your hair, a little at a time, carefully

Repeat this every 3 days for 2 weeks to get rid of any newly hatched lice.

With a little time and effort you can get rid of head lice safely, cheaply and without using any chemicals.

For more detailed advice and information you may wish to visit the following website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Myths

Myth 1

- Nits prefer clean hair
- They are not bothered. Clean, dirty it's all the same to them! It's the hair and the scalp they go for, not the state it's in.

Myth 2

- Nit nurses would reduce the problem
- They did not make any difference!
- The head lice population was unaffected by the careers of hundreds of Nitty Noras.

Myth 3

- This is the nit season
- There is no nit season. Head lice like the warmth of the human head and there is not much change to scalp temperature between summer and winter. They are a year round phenomenon.

Myth 4

- Adults do not get nits
- There is a bit of a truth behind this one. Head lice are less common in adults than children and more common in primary school than secondary school children but adults do get lice, as many teachers and parents can testify.

Myth 5

- Nits make your head itchy
- Not always! Some people have nits but no itchiness – some children who have a long term nit problem seem to become almost immune to the sensation of itching.