

Head lice advice for parents/carers

Unfortunately, head lice are a common part of primary school life and schools no longer check children's hair. As children spend so much time playing and learning together, it is very easy for them to spread.

Anyone can get head lice and contrary to popular belief having head lice is nothing to do with your personal hygiene.

Symptoms

Itching, although it is possible to have head lice without symptoms, so it is best to take a look.

How to check

Head lice are tiny and fast! Look behind ears, close to the scalp, at the back of the neck and under fringes. Adult head lice are 2 - 4 mm long, immature lice are even smaller.

What are head lice?

Head lice are live insects. Their empty eggs are called nits. Lice are wingless insects that hold on to the hair, feeding from the blood in the scalp. They spread through head-to-head contact, they do not jump. Adult females live for up to a month and lay around five eggs a day.

How to get rid of head lice

Wet combing:

1. Wash hair using ordinary shampoo.
2. Apply a conditioner to make combing easier (this also makes it harder for the louse to cling on).
3. Lightly towel dry the hair.
4. Using a comb designed for this purpose part hair into small sections and comb hair from the scalp to the end.
5. Wipe the comb each time and check for live lice.
6. Repeat until you are sure the whole head is combed.
7. Thoroughly rinse the hair and comb.
8. Comb every three days for at least two weeks until no more lice are found.

Medicated treatments:

These are available from pharmacies – please follow the treatment's instruction leaflet.

Prevention

Check your child's hair weekly – don't wait for there to be symptoms. This is by far the best way to prevent head lice. Make it a weekly habit!

Please ensure that if your child has long hair it is tied back/up.

There are a number of head lice prevention products available i.e. Vosene shampoo for kids, tea tree sprays etc.

Remember:

- If you find head lice, check and treat the whole family at the same time.
- Inform the school, baby-sitters, friends etc.
- Lice only live on human heads they will not live on bedding or clothes.
- They cannot jump or fly.
- They are only caught by head to head contact.
- Head lice are not fussy about the length of hair or how clean it is.

Useful websites for further information:

www.onceaweektakeapeek.com
www.nhs.uk