

NHS Forth Valley

Head Lice - Frequently Asked Questions

A Guide for Parents/Carers

Information Leaflet

If you cannot go let us know!

Every month around 2,000 people across Forth Valley fail to turn up for hospital appointments. This costs the NHS millions of pounds each year and increases waiting times. So if you are unable to attend or no longer require your hospital appointment please let us know so we can offer it to someone else.

We are happy to consider requests for this publication in other languages or formats such as large print. Please call 01324 590886 (24hrs), fax 01324 590867 or email disability.department@nhs.net

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SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED ON NHS FORTH VALLEY PREMISES

This includes corridors, doorways, car parks and any of our grounds. If you do smoke on NHS premises you may be liable to prosecution and a fine.



NHS Forth Valley
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Is there an epidemic of head lice in our area?

- No. Head lice will be present in any community at any one time and is a world wide problem.

Why have school stopped sending out head louse "Alert Letters"?

- Letters sent to whole classes serve no useful purpose and often result in parents or carers treating their children 'just in case' which is not only unnecessary but may be harmful.

Why does my child not have regular head inspections by the school nurse?

- Occasional checks of dry hair, whether by a health professional, parent or carers are not effective. A weekly check by parents/carers of all children in the family using a head louse detection comb to detect head lice at an early stage is recommended.

Surely it's a school problem and schools must sort it out?

- Head lice are a problem of the whole community, not just schools. They are mostly caught from head to head contact with close family and friends. This is why careful examination of all possible contacts is important.

How do I know if my child has head lice?

- The only way to be certain is to comb their hair, using a special detection comb, and finding a living, moving louse. The presence of nit cases (empty shells) are not proof of infection. The cases can be there without living louse being present.
- Parents or carer should routinely check their child's head at least weekly using a head lice detection comb. The correct technique is described within the NHS Forth Valley "Head Lice - how to check for and treat head lice", leaflet.

Where can I get advice and treatments for head lice?

- You may be asked to provide evidence of the lice found, this can be done by sticking them onto a piece of sellotape and then onto a piece of paper.
- You can go to your **local pharmacy** and purchase head lice lotion over the counter. Your local Pharmacist should be able to advise you.
- Alternatively you can contact your local **Health Centre** for advice and treatment.
- If you require a prescription for head lice lotion or bug busting kit, this should be provided for you at your Health Centre along with instructions on how to treat your child's head and any close contacts within your family who you have also found to have live, living lice present. Prescriptions for children are free.
- **Remember** - Insecticide lotion that is required to remain in contact with the head for up to or over 8 hours has proven efficacy. Shampoos, mousse, zappers and tea tree oil products, etc have not.

How do I get rid of head lice?

- If you have found a live, moving louse then give **ONE** complete treatment of **TWO** applications of lotion **SEVEN** days apart, leaving the lotion on as advised by the manufacturer. This treatment will ensure that any lice which hatch out after the first application will be destroyed by the second.
- If only one application is given, then reoccurrence is very likely. The second application must be given.

My child keeps getting re-infected with head lice. What can I do about it?

- The first thing is to check that your child is re-infected, a live living louse is the sign of infection. The scalp can itch due to other causes, which can be misinterpreted as infection.
- If a live living louse is found following treatment, it may not have been carried out as per instructions. You can obtain further advice from either your Health Centre or local Pharmacist.
- **Remember** all close contacts should be checked thoroughly for signs of head lice infection and where living, moving lice are found treatment must be given.

Why can't I treat my child's head with lotion just in case he/she has or gets head lice?

- If no sign of infection then **DO NOT** treat. Head lice can develop resistance to a particular treatment, and the person will be treated unnecessarily.