

Managing Head Lice Infection

Parents sometimes panic when they discover their child has head lice. However getting head lice has nothing to do with bad hygiene or not washing. Unfortunately, misconceptions about the cause and treatment only serve to compound the problem.

New guidelines on managing head lice have been given to schools by the Scottish Executive. We have been advised against sending out “Alert Letters” each time a parent informs us their child has head lice. Instead we should supply parents with helpful information to combat infection.

Within most schools at any one time there will be a small number of children infected with head lice. If you suspect your child has head lice please notify the parents of your child’s friends as detection and effective treatment of any outbreaks is the key to reducing the problem.

Head Lice Symptoms

- Scratching the head behind the ears.
- A rash at the nape of the neck.
- Nits stuck on the hair – 2cm from the scalp.
- Louse droppings – fine black powder may be visible on the pillow.

Head lice are spread by head to head contact. They wriggle and crawl between the hairs. They do not jump swim or fly and they don’t spread on clothes and furniture

Preventing Head Lice

- Look out for symptoms of head lice.
- Perform weekly checks, to look for nits and lice in your child’s hair.
- Keep long hair in a braid or ponytail.
- Avoid sharing combs and brushes with other people.
- Avoid wearing other people’s hair accessories (hairbands, scrunchies, caps or hats).

Discovering Head Lice

- Wash the hair, use conditioner to make combing easier.
- Divide the wet hair into layers.
- Check each layer using a fine toothed detection comb, especially around the ears and neck and remove any nits or head lice.
- If a live louse is found ask the chemist for a suitable head lice lotion.
- Ask the school, doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

Remember treatment should only be used if head lice are found