



Derrywash National School

Head Lice Policy

Introduction:

Head lice spread very easily and can cause a lot of trouble and upset for children and families. It is vital that parents/guardians of children in the class are notified as soon as the teacher is aware of a case of head lice.

School Policy:

Head lice is a community wide problem and not necessarily a school one. However, the school will support and offer advice in detection and treatment procedures. The following measures will be taken, when the school becomes aware of a case of head lice.

- Once the parent informs the school that their child is being treated for head lice, a note will be sent home to all families of children in that class. Parents are requested to inform the school as soon as they are aware that their child has head lice.
- If a child, while in school, is suspected of having head lice, parents/guardians will be notified and requested to investigate further and keep the school updated.
- If there is an ongoing problem with a particular child, the school may contact the HSE for advice and possible referral.

Sample Parent Note Re: Head Lice

Dear Parent or Guardian,

There has been a case of headlice in your child's class and your child may have been exposed. Please follow directions below for treatment.

What are headlice?

Headlice are little insects with moving legs. They are often not much bigger than a pin head, but may be as big as a sesame seed (the seeds on burger buns). They live

on, or very close to, the scalp and don't wander far down the hair shaft for very long. They can only live on humans; you cannot catch them from animals.

How are they spread?

Anyone can pick up headlice. They are most common among young children as they often put heads together during play allowing the lice walk from one head to the next. Headlice do not reflect standards of hygiene. They are just as willing to live in clean or dirty hair.

Can you stop them?

The best way is for families to learn how to check their own heads. This way they find any lice before they have a chance to breed. They can then treat them and stop them being passed round the family. The way to check someone's head is called "detection combing". This should be done regularly and in the case of a confirmed infection in one family member, the other members of the household should carry out "detection combing" twice weekly for one week. There is also a preventative spray available in the pharmacy. We would advise all parents to use this spray regularly.

How do I do detection combing?

You need a plastic detection comb, good lighting and an ordinary comb.

- Wash the hair well, then dry it with a towel. The hair should be damp, not dripping. A small amount of conditioner may help if the hair is tangled.
- Make sure there is good light, daylight is best.
- Comb the hair with an ordinary comb.
- Start with the teeth of the detection comb touching the skin of the scalp at the top of the head.
- Draw the comb carefully towards the edge of the hair.
- Look carefully at the teeth of the comb in good light.
- If there are head lice, you will find one or more lice on the teeth of the comb. A magnifying glass may be useful in identifying lice.
- Do this over and over again from the top of the head to the edge of the hair in all directions, working round the head.
- Do this for several minutes. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to do it properly for each head.

Who needs treatment?

Only treat those who have living, moving lice. If more than one family member has lice, treat all those at the same time.

How do I treat them?

A headlice lotion (not shampoo) should be used and it is essential to use the fine tooth comb alongside the lotion. Ask your local pharmacist, public health nurse or GP which lotion to use, and how long to leave it on. Follow the instructions that come with the particular product.

- Repeat treatment again seven days later, in the same way, with the same lotion.
- Check all heads a day or two after the second treatment. If you still find living, moving lice, ask your public health nurse or GP for advice.

Change and wash all bed linen, towels etc in the house.

*** Mums 'Nitty Gritty' spray has come recommended by a parent to prevent head lice. It can be bought in the chemist (McAuliffes) beside Hanley's Londis.

Head Lice Information for Parents/Guardians (www.hse.ie)

Information

Head lice are tiny wingless insects that are grey/brown in colour. They are the size of a pinhead when they hatch and 1mm long "the size of a sesame seed" when fully grown.

Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim. They are spread by head-to-head contact and climb from the hair of an infected person to the hair of someone else.

Life cycle of head lice

A female head louse lays eggs by cementing them to hairs often close to the roots where they will be kept warm by the scalp. The eggs are pin head size and difficult to see. Then the baby lice hatch 2 to 34 days later, the empty eggshells (nits) remain glued in place. Nits glisten white and become more noticeable as the growth of the hair carries them away from the scalp. Head lice feed by biting the scalp and sucking blood through it. They take 6 to 34 days to become fully grown. Once mature, a head louse can transfer from head to head. After mating, a female may start to lay eggs as early as the seventh day after she has hatched. So to break the life cycle and stop head lice spreading, they need to be removed from the head before the sixth day after hatching.

How common are head lice

Children are most commonly affected by head lice, although anyone with hair can catch them. Children are often affected by head lice because they tend to have more head-to-head contact while at school or during play. Head lice are most common in children between 9 to 33 years old.

Getting rid of head lice

Head lice can be effectively treated using medicated lotions or by wet combing, using a specially designed head lice comb. See Head lice treatment for further information. You can also ask your school nurse, health visitor, or pharmacist if you are worried about head lice or you want more advice about how to treat them.

Symptoms;

Itching

Head lice often cause the scalp to itch, although this is not always the case. Itching is not caused by the lice biting the scalp but by an allergy to the lice. Some people are not allergic to head lice, so they may not notice that they have a head lice infestation. Even if someone with head lice is allergic to them, itching can take up to three months to develop. In some cases of head lice, a rash may appear on the back of the neck. This is caused by a reaction to louse droppings.

Looking for Head Lice

Head lice are difficult to detect on the head, even when the head is closely inspected. Unhatched eggs or nits (empty eggshells) alone are not enough to diagnose an active head lice infestation. This is because it can be difficult to distinguish between eggs and nits that are dead or alive. Nits also often remain glued to hairs after successful treatment. In order to confirm an active infestation, a louse must be found through a reliable method, such as detection combing. Detection combing can be used to check more accurately for head lice.

Causes;

Head lice are transmitted by close head-to-head contact with someone who has head lice. The lice cannot fly, jump or swim, but they can climb from one hair to another. A head lice infestation is not the result of dirty hair or poor hygiene. Head lice can affect all types of hair irrespective of its condition and length. Head lice only affect humans and cannot be passed on to animals or be caught from them.

Detection;

It is very difficult to identify head lice simply by inspecting the head. Detection combing is a more reliable method of finding head lice.

Detection combing

Detection combing can be carried out on dry or wet hair. Less preparation is needed to comb dry hair, but wet combing is more accurate because lice remain motionless when they are wet. Detection combing involves using a special fine toothed head lice comb that you can buy from your local pharmacy. The comb has a tooth spacing of less than 0.3mm to trap the smallest lice. Nit combs are not suitable for louse detection. Combs that are used to remove nits must have teeth that are less than the width of a nit apart. This is too close for detecting head lice because lice that are trapped between the teeth can remain unseen and be combed back onto the head unharmed.

Wet detection combing

For wet detection combing, follow the steps below.

- Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo and apply ample conditioner, before using a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
- Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb. Make sure that the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots with the bevel-edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp.
- Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair with every stroke, and check the comb for lice.
- Remove lice by wiping or rinsing the comb.
- Work methodically through the hair, section by section, so that the whole head of hair is combed through.
- Rinse out the conditioner and repeat the combing procedure in the wet hair.

Dry detection combing

For dry detection combing, follow the steps below.

- Straighten and untangle the hair using an ordinary comb.
- Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb. Comb the hair from the scalp to the end of the hair, combing each section of hair three to four times before moving on to the next section.
- Look out for lice as the comb is drawn through the hair. If you see a louse, trap it against the face of the comb with your thumb. This helps to avoid the louse being repelled by static electricity as the comb is removed from the hair.

- Continue combing the hair, section by section, until the whole head of hair has been combed through.

Treating;

If you discover head lice in your child's hair, check the rest of your family, and alert close friends and your child's school. You can attach any head lice that you find to sticky tape and take it to your GP or practice nurse for confirmation and further advice. A diagnosis can only be confirmed if a live louse is found in the hair. If live head lice are found, take appropriate steps to treat them immediately. Treatment should only be carried out after live head lice have been found. Do not treat hair 'just in case'.

Wet combing method

The wet combing method involves removing the head lice by systematically combing the hair using a special fine-toothed comb with a spacing of less than 0.4mm. Your pharmacist can advise you on which combs are suitable. No medicated products are necessary for wet combing. This can be beneficial because head lice are becoming more resistant to the insecticides that are commonly used to remove them. However, the success of the wet-combing method depends on adopting a painstaking approach that involves regular and thorough combing. The wet-combing method is described below.

- Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo and apply ample conditioner, before using a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
- Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb. Make sure that the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots with the bevel-edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp.
- Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair with every stroke and check the comb for lice.
- Remove lice by wiping or rinsing the comb.
- Work methodically through the hair section by section so that the whole head of hair is combed through.
- Rinse out the conditioner and repeat the combing procedure in the wet hair.
- Repeat the procedure on day five, nine and 13 in order to clear the young lice as they hatch, before they have time to reach maturity.

The time that it will take to comb your child's hair will depend on the type of hair that they have and its length. For example, short, straight hair can be quickly

prepared and can be fine-toothed combed in a few minutes, whereas longer, curlier hair will take longer to comb.

Medicated lotion or spray

Medicated lotion or spray is an alternative method for treating head lice. However, no medicated treatment is 100% effective. Your pharmacist will be able to recommend an over the counter lotion or spray.

Medicated treatments should only be used if a living moving head louse is found.

Make sure that you have enough lotion to treat everyone in your family who is affected by head lice. Use enough to coat the scalp and the length of the hair during each application.

Follow the instructions that come with the medicated lotion or spray when applying it. Depending on the product you are using, the length of time that it needs to be left on the head can vary from 10 minutes to 8 hours. The normal advice is to treat once, then repeat after seven days. Some medicated products also supply a comb for removing dead lice and eggs.

Traditional insecticides must not be used more than once a week for three weeks in a row. Some products carry a fire warning.

Some medicated products may be capable of killing eggs as well as lice, although there is no certainty of this. Check for baby lice hatching from eggs three to five days after you use a product, and again 10 to 12 days afterwards.

A minimum of two applications of lotion are needed to kill the lice over the hatching period because the lotions do not always kill louse eggs. If the lice appear to be unaffected by the product some lice may have developed resistance to a particular insecticide or if the problem persists, seek advice from pharmacist or GP.

Cautions

Always seek advice from a healthcare professional before using medicated head lice lotions on the following groups;

- Young babies (under 6 months old)
- Pregnant women
- People with asthma or allergies. Pregnant women are advised to use either wet combing or 4% dimeticone lotion, which is licensed for use in pregnancy and breastfeeding. Always read the instructions carefully before using medicated head lice lotions.

Ratification and communication

This policy was compiled in March 2018 by the staff of Derrywash National School. The policy will be reviewed in light of experience and advice from Health Care Professionals.

This plan was presented to and ratified by the Board of Management.

Principal _____

Chairperson BOM _____

Date _____