

Head Lice in School and Guidelines for Treatment

Kingstone Academy Trust follows Health Protection Agency guidance on health control in schools and other childcare settings, and the Health and Safety Guidance for Schools - Infection Control Herefordshire Council.

As with any other health-related problem detecting head lice is the responsibility of parents. Parents need to be provided with clear information and receive effective support concerning the detection and treatment of head lice.

- Head lice will not be eradicated in the foreseeable future, but a sensible, informed approach, based on fact will help to limit the problem.
- At any one time, most schools will have a few children who have active head lice infection. This is often between 0% and 5%, rarely more.
- The perception by parents/carers and staff, however, is often that there is a serious 'outbreak' with many of the children infected. This is hardly ever the case.

Information on Head Lice Infection

- Lice will live on hair that is dirty or clean, short or long, adult or child. Short hair may make it easier for them to get from one head to another.
- High standards of personal hygiene do not necessarily prevent head lice infection.
- The method of transmission (person to person spread) is walking from head to head. The heads must touch for a duration of at least one minute or more.
- Head lice infection is not highly contagious; it takes time to spread through a population.
- Lice cannot hop, jump, fly or be drowned. Should a louse be found on a hat, collar, pillow, chair back etc. it will either be a dead louse or a damaged louse that is too weak to hang on to the hair. Adult lice can live apart from humans for only a short period of time; therefore it is rare for infection to be caught in this way.
- Lice do not keep still and move very rapidly when disturbed e.g. when undertaking detection combing.
- Most head louse infections have no symptoms, but about one third of cases experience itching.
- For a first infection, it can take up to 8 weeks for itching to start; with subsequent infections itching will occur sooner.
- Sometimes the appearance of a rash at the back of the neck is the first indication of infection.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS / CARERS

- To inspect hair for head lice regularly i.e. once a week, to help identify a head lice infection at the earliest possible stage.
- To inspect hair for lice, especially if head to head contact with an infected person has occurred, or when members of the household have been named as contacts.
- To promptly treat (at the same time) any members of the family who have head lice infection (has living, moving lice present).
- Only use insecticides as treatment when an infection is present - and NEVER as a preventive measure.

- To be vigilant for signs of infection, to inspect hair using a detection comb and to treat with head lice lotion if living moving lice are discovered.
- To contact the School Nurse / Health Visitor / GP / practice nurse or pharmacist if advice and support is required.

KINGSTONE ACADEMY TRUST POLICY

- If a member of the school staff suspects that a child has head lice, the school should ask the parent / carer:
 - to assess their child as soon as is practicable;
 - to confirm (or deny) the diagnosis ;
 - if confirmed to treat the child and undertake contact tracing as outlined in this guidance;
 - if appropriate refer the child to the school nurse / health advisor.
- Keep individual reports confidential.
- Parents/carers who report cases of lice to the school should be advised to contact the School Nurse for advice and support.
- Collaborate with the School Nurse in providing educational information to parents/carers and children about head lice.
- We do not send out 'alert letters' to other parents/carers.
- We do not exclude children who have, or are thought to have head lice.
- We do not organise wet combing campaigns such as 'Bug Busting'.

Exclusion of Children from School

- There is provision under section 521-525 of the 1996 Education Act for the local education authority to make arrangements to have pupils inspected, excluded and if necessary, treated for head lice if parents do not exercise their duty of care. However, such measures are extreme and are likely to cause as many problems as they solve. It would be difficult to justify such measures, except possibly as a last resort in very exceptional circumstances.

Detection Combing - How to do it

- You need warm water/towel/ordinary comb/detection comb/cocktail stick/ piece of kitchen tissue or toilet paper/good light.
- Wet the hair well, then towel dry it. The hair should be damp, not dripping.
- Make sure there is good light. Daylight is best.
- Comb the hair through with an ordinary comb so it is tangle-free.
- 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.
- 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.
- It takes approximately 10-20 minutes to do it properly for each head.
- If there are lice, you will find one or more lice on the teeth of the comb – remove them with a cocktail stick, or your nail, wiping them onto a piece of kitchen tissue or toilet paper.
- It may help to rub a small amount of conditioner into the hair. If you do, you will need to wipe it off the comb with tissue paper after each stroke and look for lice.
- Head lice 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).

- When finished clean the comb under the tap. A nailbrush will help to do this.
- If you find something and are not sure what it is, stick it on a piece of paper with clear sticky tape and show it to your School Nurse, Health Visitor, GP

Notes:

- You can buy a detection comb from the Pharmacist.
- If you need help and advice, ask your local pharmacist, school nurse, health visitor, GP or practice nurse.
- Do not use head lice lotions unless you are sure that you have found a living, moving louse.