



## Parent Information Sheet

### Head Lice

*Head lice and nits are very common in young children. At some point during primary school, your child might 'get nits!' Both adults and children can get head lice.*

*Head lice are small insects which are usually found close to the scalp where there is warmth, food and shelter from detection. They are picked up by head-to-head contact. As young children spend lots of time playing closely with other children, they are particularly susceptible. If your child picks up head lice it does not mean they have dirty hair.*



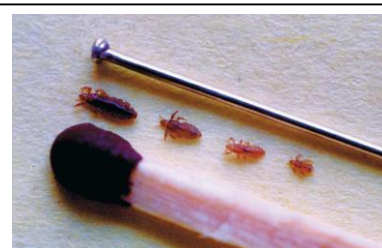
#### **Prevention**

There is no way to prevent head lice. However, these are some things you can do to stop the spread of head lice:

- **Tie Hair up** - Long hair should be tied up in school. Plaits are best.
- **Comb** – Combing through your child's dry hair twice a day will help prevent any head lice infection and get your child used to having hair combed in case of infection.
- **Shampoo** – Regular shampooing and conditioning of hair will prevent head lice becoming established. Head lice struggle to attach to conditioner.
- **Do not treat regularly** – Don't treat for head lice using lotions unless your child has got them. This will irritate the scalp and does not prevent your child from getting head lice.
- **Bed Linen** – Change bed linen regularly.
- **Check** – Check your child's hair regularly by combing through wet hair using a thin comb.

#### **What are Head Lice and Nits?**

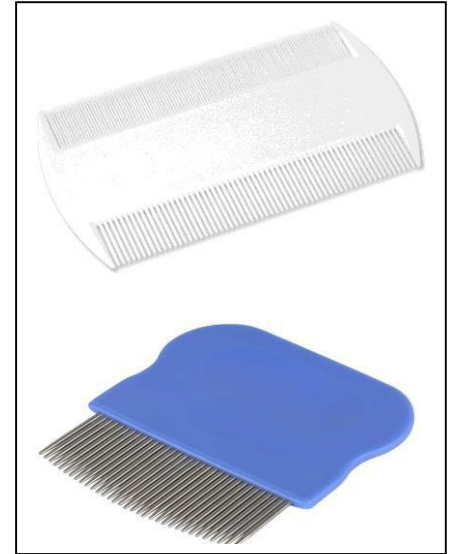
- Head Lice are small insects – up to 3mm long. The head Lice eggs are called nits. They are brown or white. They attach to the hair.
- They can be difficult to spot – especially in blond hair.
- They live very close to the scalp.
- They attach to long or short hair.
- They attach to clean or dirty hair.
- Head Lice and nits can make your child's head itch.
- Head lice do not jump, fly or swim from head-to-head. They walk.



## Detection

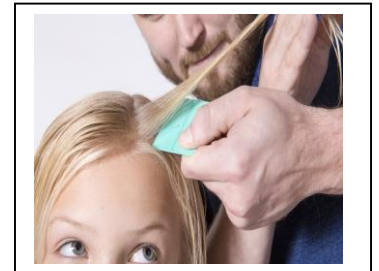
If you think your child has head lice, look online for pictures to check. You do not need to go to the doctors. A pharmacist will be able to advise you which head lice treatment is best to use.

- Section off your child's hair to look through to see if head lice are present.
- Shampoo and condition hair to make it wet and slippery. Do not rinse the conditioner off. Comb the hair using a fine comb (a nit comb is best). Comb the hair from the scalp outwards, section by section for between 10 – 30 minutes. If lice are present, they will fall out or stick to the comb. Don't forget to rinse or wipe the comb on tissue paper between strokes. Being by a sink is best.
- Repeat this method as often as required.



## Treatment

- **Wet Combing** – This is a safe and effective way of treating head lice and should be used before purchasing any treatments. This method should be carried out every 2-3 days over a 2 week period. The principles of this 'Bug Busting' method are: **Wash, Rinse, Condition and Comb:**
  1. Wash the hair with ordinary shampoo.
  2. Put ordinary conditioner on the hair – do not rinse off.
  3. Either sit your child upright on a chair or bowed over a sink, whichever is most comfortable. The bathroom is the best place.
  4. Use a wide-toothed comb first to untangle and straighten hair.
  5. Move to a fine comb or a head lice detector comb and split the hair into sections. Comb through your child's sectioned hair. Slot the teeth of the comb into each section of the hair as close to the roots as you can. Try to gently touch the scalp.
  6. Check the comb for head lice between each stroke. Remove the lice by wiping the comb on toilet or kitchen paper. Lice stuck inside the teeth should be removed by a cocktail stick.
  7. Work all over the head, section by section, combing and cleaning until the comb comes through free of head lice.
  8. Rinse the hair through, leaving the hair dripping wet. Use a clean wide toothed comb to straighten and untangle again.
  9. Keeping the hair wet, use the lice comb detector comb again to comb through the rinsed hair. Work all over the hair again until it comes through louse free.
- **Lotions** – Lotions are used when the wet combing method is not effective for treating head lice. Your pharmacist can advise you of the best treatment for your child. It is important that you read and follow the instructions carefully. The wet combing method as advised above should be used when combing through using lotions. **Lotions should not be used as a preventative measure as they will be ineffective when needed.**



- **Check all members of the family** – Check every member of your family to see if head lice are present. They do not discriminate between adults and children. Adults and children should all be checked and treated if necessary.
- **Clean** – Wash your child's bed linen to get rid of any eggs that might be present. Clean any teddies or dolls your child might sleep with.
- **Towels** – Ensure that you each have your own towels and face cloths while your child has head lice.
- **Advise** – Let your child's school know that your child has head lice. They will need to inform other parents that head lice have been spotted in the class (mentioning no names) so that they can be vigilant. Don't forget to advise any clubs your child attends.

**More Information can be found on the following websites:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-lice-and-nits/>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/head-lice.html>

<https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/skin-conditions-lice>

<https://www.bad.org.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?id=207&itemtype=document>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/from-insects-animals/Pages/Signs-of-Lice.aspx>