13 October 2017

Dear Parents

Head Lice

Unfortunately, we have a ‘little’ problem at the moment in the form of head lice! There appears to be several children in school who have a major problem with head lice. As you are aware head lice can spread very quickly between young children and their family members and as a school we are not allowed to inspect your child’s hair.

I need every parent to inspect their child’s hair and comb it daily in order to remove the nits which are lice eggs.

I understand how frustrating this problem can be for those parents who are vigilant in checking their child’s hair and, through no fault of their own, have a recurring problem. I would ask all parents to follow the advice quoted below and help us to keep this condition to a minimum.

May I draw your attention to the school brochure which advises you that:

*Head lice are a constant problem! However, it is not the school’s responsibility to deal with this matter – it is for the parents to check regularly, their child’s hair and scalp. If lice are detected, medication, available from chemists, should be applied thoroughly to your child’s hair and scalp. All parents should recognise that head lice have a life cycle of 2 weeks, which means that eggs may hatch after the 1st treatment. Parents should remain vigilant and thoroughly wash and brush hair regularly. Children's hair should be clear of lice before they return to school.*

Please find overleaf the guidelines which are issued by Solihull Health Authority.

Thank you for your support with this uncomfortable problem.

Yours sincerely

Beverley Elliott
Headteacher
Head Lice

Dispelling the myths
They are not caught from shared hats, towels or combs.
Head lice do not fly, swim or jump.
Inspections by the school nurse on dry hair do not work.
We do not have a resistance problem. Failures are due to re-infection from untreated contacts or not following instructions for treatment correctly. Adults can be infected by head lice.
Head lice shampoo is not very effective; lotions are better. Nits (white shiny egg cases) do not need treatment, unless a live louse is also present.

How do we catch head lice?
Only from head to head contact with someone who has lice, usually another member of the family or a ‘best friend’.

How can I tell if I have head lice?
Use a detector comb (available from chemists) weekly on wet conditioned hair as part of normal grooming. Inspection of dry hair will miss most cases.

If you have head lice you will be able to see them on the comb.

Treatment
Chemical treatment is the most effective method of killing head lice. Chemicals used following instructions are safe. For suitable chemical treatments discuss with pharmacists.
Alternatively, detection combing wet hair covered with conditioner every three days, for at least two weeks, until no lice are detected, may solve the problem.
No treatment can work if all infested contacts are not treated.

Who should be treated?
Only those found to have live lice should be treated. Everyone should have their wet hair combed with a detection comb weekly.

Detection combing - how to do it
You need:
- Warm water
- Towels
- Plastics detection comb (from the chemist)
- Good lighting
- Ordinary comb

- Wet the hair well then dry it with the towel. The hair should be damp, not dripping.
- 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 toward 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.
- Do this for several minutes. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to do it properly for each head.
- If there are head lice, you will find one or more lice on the teeth of the comb.
- It may help to rub a handful of conditioner into the hair. If you do, you will need to wipe it off the comb with a tissue and look for the lice in it.
- 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 a burger bun).
- Clean the comb under the tap. A nail brush will help to do this.
- If you find something new and aren’t sure what it is, stick it on a piece of paper with sellotape and show it to your school nurse or family doctor. There can be other things in the hair which are not lice.

Notes
- You can buy a plastic detection comb from the chemist.
- If you need help and advice, ask your local chemist, health visitor, school nurse, family doctor or practice nurse.
- Don’t use head lice lotions unless you are sure that you have found a live louse.

Produced by Solihull Health Authority
& Solihull Healthcare NHS Trust