

## **Head Lice**

### What is it?

Lice are small parasites that live on the surface of the body. Head lice infest the hair and scalp, and are particularly common among young children (pre-school and infant school). Head lice are not responsible for any illness and are not a public health problem.

### Symptoms

Infestation with head lice is often asymptomatic although it may cause intense itching of the scalp. It may be possible to see the eggs of the lice (nits) attached to the hair and occasionally a louse itself may be seen crawling through the hair. The only certain way to diagnose an infestation is by detecting living lice in the hair by wet combing.

### Spread

Head lice can easily spread from person to person by direct contact or by contact with personal objects such as hats, clothing, combs and brushes. A person with head lice can spread them to others until they are successfully treated. Although the spread of head lice from person to person occurs mainly outside school, head lice often present in the school setting. However the main responsibility for prevention and control of head lice rests with the parents, who should regularly inspect their children's hair, preferably by weekly wet combing, and treat infestations correctly when and if they occur.

### Prevention

If a case is discovered at school the parents of the affected children will be notified discreetly and asked to treat their child without delay. Treatment should be either by the correct use of an appropriate insecticide, available from the GP or local pharmacy, or, if preferred, by wet combing twice weekly until the infestation is cleared. All members of the family should wet comb their hair to identify any live lice, and treat as above if they are found.

### Exclusion Period

Children with infestation do not need to be excluded from school but they should be treated as soon as possible to minimise transmission to others.

### Further information

Please refer to the information in the link below

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Head-lice/Pages/introduction.aspx>

It used to be the case that the NHS provided nit packs for parents when there was an outbreak at school. But this is no longer available due to cost. Also nit nurses didn't stop nits and reinfection was still a big issue. You can check your child's hair on Monday and they'll be free of nits but on Tuesday they get infected via another child. NHS advice is to check the hair thoroughly at least once a week (Once a week, take a peek) and in particular around the hairline and nape of the neck where lice like to congregate.