

General Head Lice Reminder

What are Head Lice?

- Insects that live and breed on your head
- They feed by injecting small amounts of saliva and taking tiny amounts of blood from the scalp
- They are a nuisance - **not a health hazard** – They do not transmit disease
- 6-12 million people worldwide get head lice each year



Signs of Head Lice

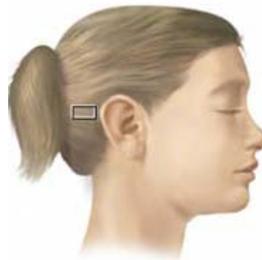
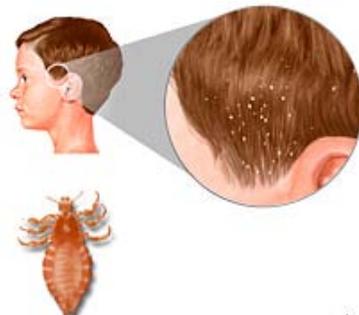
- Sometimes there are no symptoms
- It may take 4 to 6 weeks to develop the following symptoms
 - Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair
 - Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites
 - Irritability
 - Sores on the head caused by scratching (These can sometimes become infected)

How do you get Head Lice?

- In most cases, close contact with someone who has head lice (heads touching during play/sports, sleepovers)
- Head lice **do not** fly or jump but crawl really quickly
- Occasionally, sharing of hats, scarves, combs, hair ribbons, pillows, brushes, towels and helmets

Common Sites where Head Lice are found

- Commonly found around ears, forehead and nape of neck.
- Lie close to scalp



Head louse



Louse eggs (nits)

Who should check for Head Lice?

- Parents and/or caregivers

Who should be treated for head lice?

- Anyone who has an active infestation of head lice (live lice) should be treated with a treatment that is appropriate for them.
- This means that siblings, parents or bed mates should be treated **only** if live lice are found when they are checked.

Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities

- Be aware of the signs and the symptoms of infestation;
- Be familiar with the technique for examining hair for lice and nits;
- Examine children's heads weekly for signs of infestation as part of routine hygiene;
- Notify the school when child has lice and others who have come into contact with the child, that is, family members, neighbours, etc.;
- Carry out treatment on family members with live moving lice;
- Wash personal items such as combs, brushes, bedding and hats;
- Inform the school that treatment has been completed

School Responsibilities

- Schools should not take on the responsibility of checking heads for head lice as traditional methods of parting the hair and looking at the scalp is not efficient and many infestations may be missed.
- "Alert" letters should not be sent out. These can cause an "outbreak" of imaginary lice.
- Children who may have lice **should not** be excluded from school; if they do have lice, they will probably have been there for weeks already.
- The school should give best practice information on lice to parents and staff, including the importance of regular detection combing and how to do it. Provision of information should be on a regular basis throughout the year, not just when there is thought to be an "outbreak."

