

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

- To reduce the incidence of head lice at Cherry Lane.
- To describe a policy for the management of head lice.

Objectives

- To ensure consistent advice is offered by all personnel involved.
- To raise the level of awareness within the community, about the nature and management of head lice.
- To ensure roles and responsibilities of parents/carers, children, school staff and health professionals are defined and understood.

INTRODUCTION

Like the common cold, anyone can catch head lice. It is a community problem, which affects adults and children.

The head louse is a small insect, which lives close to the scalp for warmth and feeds by sucking blood. It moves by crawling through hair and cannot jump or fly.

The female lays five to eight eggs a day. They are glued to the base of the hair shaft and take 5-7 days to hatch.

The louse grows to full size in ten days, and then is then ready to lay eggs, and can live for up to 40 days.

Empty egg cases are white and called nits. They grow out of the hair. They cannot spread head lice.

How Are Head Lice Spread ?

Head to head contact is the only way of spreading head lice. Head lice do not jump or fly.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Head lice can affect adults and children, therefore the responsibility for the prevention and control of head lice lies with the individual if adult, and parent or carer if a child is affected. Control of head lice is possible with proper contact tracing and management of treatments.

All adults should inspect their own and their children's hair at least once a week if head lice are a problem locally. They should use a detection comb.

If live lice are found, then a treatment option should be chosen and carried out as described below.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treat only if live lice are found.

Treat only the individuals who are affected.

Treatment is made by either PHYSICAL REMOVAL or applying insecticides.

Each of these treatment options relies on the use of a rigid plastic comb with a 0.2mm space between teeth. Metal combs are not recommended as repeated use can wear away the surface of hair.

The wet combing method

The combing method is effective if carried out regularly, carefully and consistently, paying particular attention to the nape of the neck where head lice often collect.

To facilitate this method:

With the conditioner left in, comb through to remove tangles. The wet hair is then parted and combed using a fine comb as described below.

Hair may be washed using ordinary shampoo, rinsed and conditioner applied.

Or

Light oil such as olive or grape oil can be applied to the dry hair. Hair is then parted and combed using a fine comb. Light oils wash out easily and make combing easier.

In both cases conditioners and oils are not treatments but are used to ease combing.

Lice should be removed and disposed of by wiping the comb thoroughly on tissue paper or rinsing under water to remove any head lice.

The conditioner or oil should be then washed off and combing should be immediately repeated on wet hair.

Continue this process every 3-4 days for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks the hair should be clear of lice.

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