



HAWRIDGE & CHOLESBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

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Dear Parent/Carer

We have a few cases of head lice in school. Please read the following NHS advice and act accordingly. It would be really helpful if all parents could please check their children as soon as possible to prevent any further infestation. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Head Lice

Causes

Head lice are transferred by close hair-to-hair contact. They cannot jump, fly or swim, but walk from one hair to another. It is a misconception that head lice infestation is a result of dirty hair and poor hygiene; in fact, head lice prefer clean hair and skin. They like both long and short hair.

Diagnosis

The presence of head lice is indicated by repeated itching of the scalp, or by detecting them in the hair. This can be done using a special comb. Your GP or nurse can only confirm the diagnosis if a live louse is found in the hair.

If you or your children have head lice you should check the rest of the family and alert close friends and your child's school.

Treatment

Head lice are difficult to remove because of their size, reinfestation rate, life cycle and their ability to develop immunity to insecticides. Lice can be a persistent and recurring nuisance, so it is important to treat them quickly and thoroughly.

Once infestation is confirmed it can be treated at home using wet combing with conditioner or medicated lotions combined with a special nit comb available from pharmacies.

Wet combing method

Wet combing or bug busting is used to remove lice without using chemical treatments:

- Wash the hair as normal
- Apply conditioner liberally (this causes the lice to lose their grip on the hair)
- Comb the hair through with a normal comb first
- With a fine tooth comb, comb from the roots along the complete length of the hair and after each stroke check the comb for lice and wipe it clean. Work methodically over the whole head for at least 30 minutes
- Rinse the hair as normal
- Repeat every three days for at least two weeks

This method can be helpful because head lice are growing increasingly resistant to insecticides used to remove them.

Medicated lotion or rinse

Ask your pharmacist for an over-the-counter insecticide lotion or crème rinse. Apply the preparation according to instructions and remove the lice and eggs with a fine-toothed nit comb. Care should be taken when applying treatment because they are usually toxic. The normal advice is to treat once and repeat seven days later.

Always ask for advice before using medicated lotions on young babies (under 6 months), pregnant women or people with asthma and always read the instructions carefully.

Sometimes, complementary therapy treatments, such as tea tree oil are recommended for treating head lice, but their effectiveness has not yet been proven.

There is no need to wash clothing or bedding specially – any lice found away from the scalp are likely to be damaged, dead or dying and so unable to start a new colony.

Prevention

There is no prevention for head lice infestation other than normal hair care and checking hair and scalp periodically.

Tying back the hair of children with long hair helps reduce the likelihood of contact between their hair and that of an infected child.

Do not use medicated lotions or rinses 'just in case', for example in close friends or family members. They should only be used if live lice are found. Regular combing of hair using the bug-busting method (see Treatment section) can help with early detection as well as treatment.

Yours sincerely

The Office