

IMPORTANT NOTICE - HEADLICE AND NITS



We have had several complaints of nit re-infestations after treatment. This means there are people not checking and treating for them. This is very frustrating and unfair for those parents who are vigilant in looking out for these and treating them.

IMPORTANT—help control and avoid infestation by brushing the hair and scalp thoroughly at least daily. This makes the scalp and hair impossible for the nits to live in, breaking their legs and killing them.

If you find nits please treat promptly—talk to your pharmacist about treatment options.

PLEASE read the following information carefully and take appropriate action to help us eliminate this problem.

The following information has been sourced from the Ministry of Education Website

Headlice are not new. Headlice and the eggs (nits) have been with us for centuries. Egyptian mummies over 3000 years old have been found with the remains of headlice.

Headlice are a common problem throughout the world. Schools do not give people headlice; people bring headlice to schools. Headlice are also brought to churches, supermarkets, sports fields and homes by people. A population is likely to host headlice most of the time. Infestation levels fluctuate for no apparent reason and sometimes headlice appear to be epidemic while at other times they appear to be absent.

Controlling headlice requires people in a community as a whole to act.

Myths

Headlice can jump or swim from person to person.

NO! *Headlice have legs designed for climbing so need to be able to crawl from person to person in close proximity. Headlice cannot swim.*

Only dirty people have headlice.

NO! *Headlice feed on blood, not dirt. Anyone can host headlice.*

Children get headlice from classroom carpets or animals.

NO! *Headlice only live on human heads.*

Some facts - What to look for

Headlice are small insects approximately 2 to 4 mm long and about 1mm wide. They have six legs with claws and are usually a light or dark brown colour.

Eggs (nits) are small and hard like a grain of salt and are yellow-white in colour. Eggs are usually found on the hair very close to the scalp. Those found further from the scalp than one to one and half centimetres from the scalp are probably dead or hatched. Sometimes a person with headlice or eggs might feel itchy, but not always.

Checking for headlice or eggs

Check weekly using bright light and by parting the hair. Check the scalp, especially at the front, nape of the neck, behind the ears and at the base of a pony tail or plaits.

Small red dots behind the ears and on the nape of the neck may be headlice bites. Eggs are usually easier to see than headlice. Don't be confused by dandruff that is flaky and easily removed. Eggs will feel sandy or gritty when fingers are run through the hair.

Transmission

Headlice crawl from head to head. Because young children are often in close proximity to one another in play or classwork, or in close proximity to family adults at home, headlice have opportunities to move from one head to another. It is impossible to know the origin of an outbreak.

A less likely method of transmission is through the sharing of things like combs, hairbrushes, hats, and other things that touch the head and hair.

Because headlice need food, humidity and warmth to survive it is unlikely they will be found alive on car seats, curtains or carpets.

Adolescents and adults tend to spend little time in close proximity to others so transmission of headlice amongst older people is less likely than amongst the young.

Hosting headlice

Headlice do not cause disease. They may cause an uncomfortable itching. At worst, a child with headlice may scratch excessively and break the scalp possibly allowing infection in. An infestation of headlice should be detected and dealt with long before it becomes either highly visible or irritating.