



SEVENOAKS PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Headmaster Mr L Harrison

Head Lice

Introduction/aim

This information sheet gives a clear outline of the responsibilities of parents/carers and school, in the prevention, treatment and control of head lice.

Facts about head lice

Head lice are grey or beige in appearance and are around 3mm long. They lay their eggs on individual hairs, more often behind ears or on the nape of the neck. After seven days the eggs hatch and the young louse emerges, leaving the egg case behind still attached to the hair. These discarded egg cases are known as 'nits'.

Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim, and can only be spread by head to head contact as a louse crawls one head to another. Whilst head lice do not carry any serious bacteria or disease, if they are left untreated an infestation could lead to a secondary bacterial infection.

Prevention and control

We would encourage parents and carers to check their child's/ children's hair weekly. This is best done when the hair is wet and can be combed through with a fine toothed or specialised lice detecting comb. Adding conditioner makes this easier. The hair should be parted and individual sections checked for nits clinging to the hairs (live louse are found close to the scalp).

Treatment options

Only treat if louse are found.

Pesticide Treatments

There are several available in chemists and a pharmacist, or your GP will give advice. The pesticides generally have to be administered twice, seven days apart, in order to kill any eggs which have not yet hatched. The instructions must be followed carefully as failing to do so

could result in reinfestation. Some of these may be unsuitable to use if the child has a skin condition or asthma, again check instructions and ask advice.

Non Pesticide treatment

These are treatments which contain a substance called Dimeticone, which has a physical effect on the lice by coating them and interfering with their respiration. With this treatment there is far less chance of the lice becoming treatment resistant. It is not absorbed through the skin and is recommended as safe to use if eczema or asthma is present.

Wet combing

Hair should be combed when wet with lots of conditioner applied, again from root to tip in sections, using a comb specifically for lice detection. The lice are picked up on the comb and can then be disposed of. It is recommended that this is repeated every three to four days for a minimum of two weeks, or until no lice are found on three consecutive sessions.

Natural remedies

Tea tree oil shampoo and other non-chemical, organic treatments can be bought in health shops. Electric head combs are available for use on dry hair, but have restrictions as they can affect some medical conditions.

School

Children will not be excluded from school, but should always have long hair tied back neatly and securely, and if possible discouraged from head to head contact with other children.

The school nurse no longer carries out routine checks to look for head lice as this has been found to be ineffective in the prevention of outbreaks, but please seek advice from Nurse Vincent if you have any questions or need support on this matter.

If your child has head lice it would be advisable to check the whole family, and always inform your child's form teacher. Your child will not be singled out or it made common knowledge that your child has head lice.

For further information and advice, please visit the following NHS website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>