

HEAD LICE

ADVICE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

(from Bucks County Council Health & Safety Handbook)

THE FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

- Head lice are small insects (about the size of a sesame seed when fully grown) that live very close to the scalp.
- Nits are not the same as lice. Nits are the empty egg cases which stick to the hair.
- You only have head lice if you find a living, moving louse (not a nit).
- Anybody can get head lice – adults and children, even grandparents.
- Head lice don't care if the hair is dirty or clean, long or short.
- A lot of infections are caught from close family and friends in the home and community, not school.
- Head lice can walk from one head to another if the heads are pressed together for some time. They do not fly, jump or swim.
- Regular hair care may help to spot lice early.
- The best way to stop infection is for families to check their heads regularly using detection combing.

DETECTION COMBING

You need: plastic detection comb (from the chemist), good lighting, ordinary comb, conditioner (optional)

1. Wash the hair well, towel dry until damp but not dripping.
2. First comb the hair with an ordinary comb (you may put some conditioner on hair first to make combing easier).
3. Then, using the detection comb, touching the skin of the scalp at the top of the head, slowly draw the comb towards the end of the hair.
4. Carefully check the teeth of the comb in good light.
5. Repeats steps 3 and 4 working your way around the head from the top of the scalp to the ends of the hair. This will probably take 10-15 minutes.
6. If there are head lice you will find one or more on the teeth of the comb. Clean the comb under running water – a nailbrush helps to do this.
7. If you find lice, or something which you are unsure about, stick it onto a piece of paper with clear sticky tape and show it to your GP, nurse or local chemist.
8. ***The best way to stop infection is to do combing regularly (weekly including in school holidays). NEVER use insecticidal liquids, lotions or shampoos to PREVENT infection or "just in case".***

HOW TO TREAT HEAD LICE

DO NOT TREAT UNLESS YOU ARE SURE YOU HAVE FOUND A LIVING, MOVING LOUSE.

Ask your GP, Practice Nurse, Health Visitor or Pharmacist which head louse lotion or liquid to use and how long to leave it on. Do **NOT** use head louse shampoo and do **NOT** use head louse treatments on your family "just in case".

CONTACT TRACING

You may need to find where the lice came from or you may be reinfected. The source is probably a family member or close friend who may not know they have lice. Please ask everyone your family has been in contact with to check their own family's hair using the detection combing method above.

REMEMBER...

It doesn't matter how many nits you have, or how itchy your scalp is – if you can't find a living, moving louse you don't have head lice.