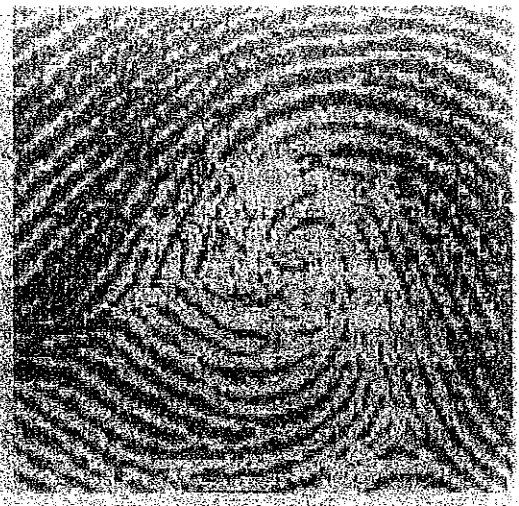
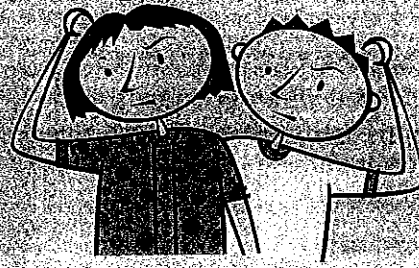


Head lice: Scratching for Answers?



Where do head lice come from?

Head lice have been around for thousands of years. As with any insect, they learn to adapt to their environment in order to survive. We are never going to be completely rid of them, but we can make managing them easier.

Do head lice fly or jump?

Head lice do not have wings so they cannot fly. They can't jump because they do not have 'knees'.

So how do head lice move around?

Head lice CRAWL very fast and require head to head contact for transmission. It is possible that because of the way young children play, head lice are seen more widely amongst primary school children than adolescents or adults.

Can head lice spread disease?

No. Head lice cannot transmit or pass disease on to people.

Who is responsible for checking and treating head lice?

Like similar health conditions such as scabies, and ringworm, it is a parent or guardian's responsibility to treat and care for their child.

Do head lice live in carpets, clothes, hats or sheets?

No. Head lice very rarely fall from the head. They require blood to survive. Head lice feed 3-4 times a day and without blood, will dehydrate in 6 hours in a dry climate and 24 hours in a humid climate.

An egg requires warmth to hatch and is the reason why they are laid close to the scalp. The further away from the scalp, the less likely they are to survive.

Is it true that head lice only like clean hair?

No. Head lice are not selective. They don't care if hair is long, short, blonde, brown, washed this morning or last week. As long as they are warm, and have blood to drink, then they are content.

What treatment kills 100% of head lice or eggs?

There is no single treatment that kills 100% of head lice or eggs. Whichever treatment you choose it can take time and persistence to get rid of head lice. Use a method that will not risk the health of your child.

Is there a way to prevent head lice?

No. It's important to check your child's head regularly with conditioner and comb even when you don't think your child has head lice. There is no research to prove that chemical or herbal therapies can prevent head lice.

How does the conditioner and comb method work?

It's a very cheap and effective way of finding head lice. Hair conditioner does not kill lice, but it does stun them for about 20 minutes, meaning they do not move around, and it is difficult for them to hang on. This gives you time to comb through the hair with a fine tooth (head lice) comb.

How does a chemical treatment work?

Only use products that are licensed or registered for head lice. There are four different active chemicals that target head lice, each works differently and aim to kill lice and/or eggs.

Do some products work better than others?

Over time, head lice may develop resistance to some chemicals. It is important to check if a treatment you used has worked, and if not, treat again with another product that has a different chemical in it.

Why do you have to treat again in seven days time?

Head lice eggs take 6-7 days to hatch. And when you treat, it's easy to miss an egg or two. By treating again in seven days, you are aiming to kill and comb out any head lice that have since hatched from eggs, which were missed.

Should I treat everyone in the family?

It is important to check each family member, using conditioner and comb, for head lice but only treat those with live lice.

What should I wash or treat at home?

As head lice only live for a short time off the head, the only extra cleaning needed is to wash the pillowslip on the hot cycle or place in clothes dryer. Head lice combs can be cleaned in water hotter than 60 degrees.

Why does my child keep getting re-infected?

Re-infection is the least likely reason for head lice returning in a week's time. If eggs do not die, or were not removed during the original treatment they may hatch and the lifecycle starts all over again. To break this lifecycle you must re-treat (regardless of treatment method) seven days after the first treatment and continue with weekly checking.

Does my child have to miss school?

According to the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001, children with head lice can be readmitted to school after head lice treatment has commenced. A certificate from a doctor or council is not required before your child goes back to school. Head lice are not the fault of schools, other families or children.



For more information see your School Nurse or
www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice

Information and photograph used are courtesy of Assoc Professor Rick Speare and the team of researchers at the School of Public Health, James Cook University, Queensland.

Created October 2003

Helpful Hints

Using the conditioner and comb method every week is the best way to detect head lice early, and minimise the problem.

Cutting back hair can help prevent the spread of head lice.

Many parents will complain that they are doing the right thing, but other parents aren't. Placing the blame will not achieve anything. Instead of pointing the finger, help each other.

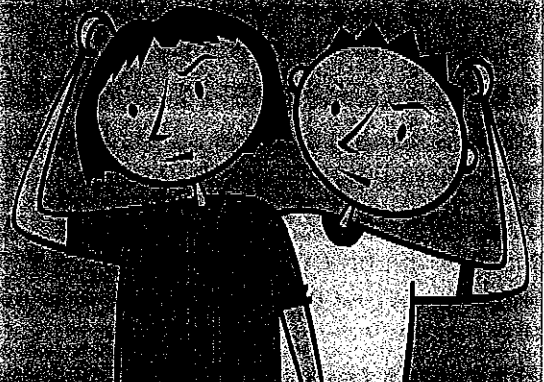
A school with a head lice education program and policy in line with *Scratching for Answers* is a proactive school attempting to help families address a common health concern.

The DHS head lice management strategy is supported by the Department of Education and Training.

Treatment Choices

Chemical: Treat and comb to remove the head lice and eggs, and repeat in 7 days.

Non-chemical: Use conditioner and comb to remove the head lice and eggs, and repeat every 2 days until no live lice have been found for 10 days.



Treating and Controlling Head Lice

While children are at school many families will have contact with head lice. The information contained here will help you treat and control head lice.

Catching Head Lice

Head lice have been around for many thousands of years. Anyone can get head lice and given the chance head lice move from head to head without discrimination.

Head lice are small, wingless, blood sucking insects. Their colour varies from whitish-brown to reddish-brown. Head lice only survive on humans. If isolated from the head they die very quickly, usually within 24 hours.

People get head lice from direct **hair to hair contact** with another person who has head lice. This can happen when people play, cuddle or work closely together.

Head lice do not have wings or jumping legs so they cannot fly or jump from head to head. They can only crawl.

Finding Head Lice

Many lice do not cause an itch, so you have to **look carefully to find them**.

Head lice are found on hair itself and move to the scalp to feed. They have six legs which end in a claw and they rarely fall from the head. Louse eggs (also called nits) are laid within 1.5cm of the scalp and are firmly attached to the hair. They resemble dandruff, but can't be brushed off.

Lice can crawl and hide. The easiest and most effective way to find them is to follow these steps:

Step 1 Comb any type of hair conditioner on to **dry, brushed (detangled) hair**. This stuns the lice and makes it difficult for them to grip the hair or run around.

Step 2 Now comb sections of the hair with a fine tooth, head lice comb.

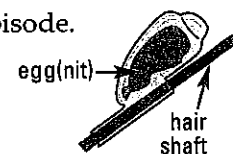
Step 3 Wipe the conditioner from the comb onto a paper towel or tissue

Step 4 Look on the tissue and on the comb for lice and eggs.

Step 5 Repeat the combing for every part of the head at least 4 or 5 times.

If lice or eggs are found, the child's hair should be treated.

If your child has been treated recently and you only find empty hatched eggs, you may not have to treat as the empty eggs could be from a previous episode.



Head Lice Eggs

Head lice eggs are small (the size of a pinhead) and oval. A live egg will 'pop' when squashed between fingernails.

Dead eggs have crumpled sides and hatched eggs look like tiny boiled eggs with their tops cut off.

To optimise treatment remove as many eggs as possible.

Head Lice Combs

Combs with long, rounded stainless steel teeth positioned very close together have been shown to be the most effective, however, any head lice comb can be used.

Treating Head Lice

Concentrate on the head – there is **no evidence** to suggest that you need to clean the house or classroom.

Head lice products must be applied to **all parts of the hair and scalp**

No treatment kills all of the eggs so treatment must involve two application seven days apart. The purpose of the first treatment is to kill all lice, the second treatment is to kill young lice hatched over the next six days.

Cover the person's eyes, for example with a towel, while the treatment is being applied.

If you are using lotions, apply the product to dry hair.

For shampoos, wet the hair, but use the least amount of water possible.

Apply the treatment near the scalp, using an ordinary comb to cover the hair from root to tip. Repeat this several times until all the hair is covered.

If you choose not to use an insecticide, the conditioner and comb method can be used every second day until there have been no live lice found for ten days.

There is no need to treat the whole family, unless they also have head lice.

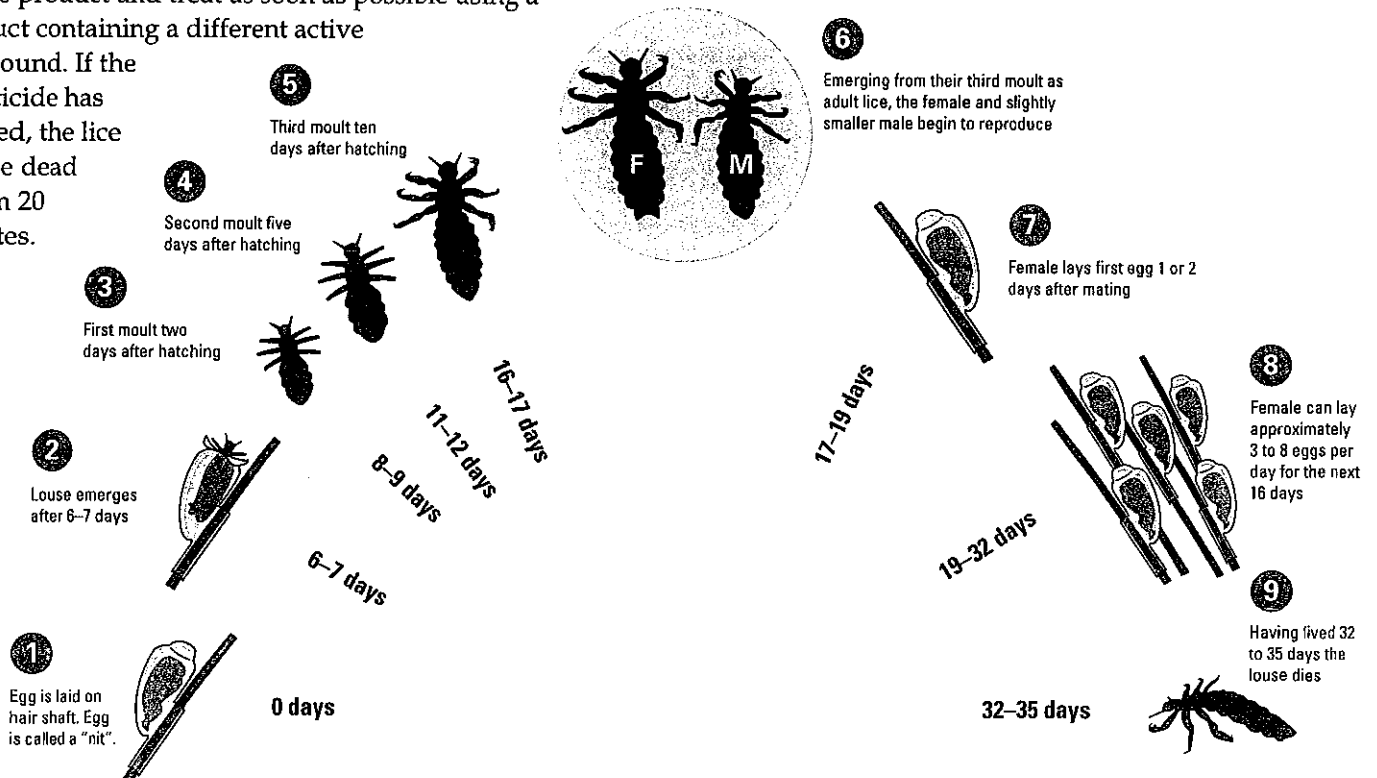
Only the pillowcase requires special laundering; either wash it in hot water (at least 60°C) or dry it using a clothes dryer on the hot or warm setting.

Testing Resistance

Head lice products belong in one of the following categories depending on the active compound they contain:

- Pyrethrins
- Synthetic pyrethroids (permethrin and bioallethrin)
- Organophosphates (maldison or malathion)
- Herbal, with or without natural (non-chemical) pyrethrins.

Insecticide resistance is common so you should test if lice are dead. If they are, treat again in seven days using the same product. If the lice are not dead, the treatment has not worked and the lice are resistant to the product and all products containing the same active compound. Wash off the product and treat as soon as possible using a product containing a different active compound. If the insecticide has worked, the lice will be dead within 20 minutes.



Any head lice product could cause a reaction and should be used with care by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, children less than 12 months and people with allergies, asthma or open wounds on the scalp. If you are unsure, please check with your Pharmacist or Doctor.

Preventing Head Lice

There is no product available to prevent head lice. Using the **conditioner and comb method once a week** will help you detect any head lice early and minimise the problem. Tying back long hair can help prevent the spread of head lice.

Regulations

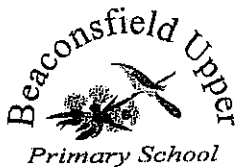
Children with head lice are required under the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations to be excluded from school, day care or crèche until treatment has commenced. A child with head lice can be treated one evening and return to school the next day, even if there are still some eggs present.

Further Information

See website: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice>

The information in this pamphlet is based on the research conducted and written by Associate Professor Rick Speare and the team of researchers at, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, James Cook University.

Photographs courtesy of Professor Russell, Department of Medicine Entomology, University of Sydney.



CONSENT FORM TO CONDUCT HEAD LICE INSPECTIONS

Permission to cover the duration of the student's school at:

Beaconsfield Upper Primary School, Stoney Creek Road, Upper Beaconsfield

Throughout your child's schooling, the school will be arranging head lice inspections of students to help parents manage head lice.

The management of head lice infection works best when all children are involved in our screening program. The school is aware that this can be a sensitive issue and is committed to maintaining student confidentiality and avoiding stigmatisation.

The inspections of students will be conducted by trained parents approved by the Principal and School Council. Before any inspections occur the parent's conducting the inspections will explain to all students what is being done and why. It will be emphasised to students that the presence of head lice in their hair does not mean that their hair is less clean or well kept than anyone else's. It will also be pointed out that head lice can be itchy and annoying and if you know you have got them, you can do something about it. All volunteers sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure information privacy for all children and families.

The parent's conducting the inspections will check through each student's hair to see if any lice or eggs are present.

Person's authorised by the school principal may also visually check your child's hair for the presence of head lice, when it is suspected that head lice may be present. They do not physically touch the child's head during a visual check.

In cases where head lice are found, the parent's inspecting the student will inform the student's teacher, the principal and office staff. The school will make appropriate contact with the parents/guardians/carers.

Please note that health regulations requires that where a child has head lice, that child should not return to school until appropriate treatment has commenced. The school may request the completion of an 'action taken form', which requires parents/guardians/carers to nominate if and when the treatment has started.

Please complete and return this whole form in order for you child to be involved in this screening program:

Child's Name: Child's Grade:

Parent's/guardian's full name:

Address:

I hereby give my consent for the above named child to participate in the school's head lice inspection program for the duration of their schooling at this school.

Signature of parent/guardian/carer: Date:

Please inform the school if guardianship/custody changes for your child, as this form will need to be re-signed to reflect these changes. Please also inform the school in writing if you no longer wish to provide consent for the school to undertake head lice inspections for your child.