

Dear parent/carer,

### **Top Tips for Primary School Children**

#### **Head Lice:**

Head lice are a common problem amongst school children, and it's thought that 1 in 3 children aged 4-11 may get head lice at some point during the year.

They are whitish to grey-brown in colour, and smaller than the size of a pinhead when first hatched. When fully grown they're about the size of a sesame seed. They can't fly, jump or swim and are spread by head-to-head contact, climbing from the hair of an infected person to the hair of someone else.

A head lice infestation isn't the result of dirty hair or poor hygiene. All types of hair can be affected, regardless of its length and condition.

Effects of head lice can be itching, which is caused by an **allergy to the lice** rather than the lice biting the scalp. If your child is not allergic to the lice, they will not itch so it's vital you check regularly.

#### **Treating head lice by wet combing, using a specially designed head lice comb:**

- Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo and apply plenty of conditioner.
- Use a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
- Once the comb moves freely through the hair, switch to the louse detection comb.
- Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair with every stroke, check for lice and wipe and rinse the comb.
- Work methodically through the hair, section by section, so that the whole head is combed through.
- Rinse out conditioner and repeat the combing procedure.
- Repeat the procedure on days 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15, so that you clear young lice as they hatch, before they have time to reach maturity.

Alternative to wet combing is the use of **lotions and sprays** – this can be recommended over the counter at a pharmacy.

Head lice take 9 to 10 days to become fully grown. A female head louse may start to lay eggs from nine days after she's hatched. Therefore, to break the cycle and stop them spreading, they need to be **removed within 9 days of hatching**.

#### Preventing head lice:

It's difficult to prevent a head lice infestation because head lice are spread by head-to-head contact. However **regular detection combing** for example on a weekly basis – is the best way to find new lice quickly.

Lotions and sprays **don't** prevent head lice infestations and should only be used if a live louse has been found on your or your child's head.

If the lice appear unaffected by treatment, or if the problem persists, seek advice from your school nurse, pharmacist or GP. For more information on head lice, go to the following NHS website at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>.

Please contact your local School Nurse Team if you would like further advice or support. Contact us at <http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/parents/oxfordshire/school-health-nurses/>

