

Head Lice Issues

All schools, including St Cecilia's have a constant battle with head lice. Year 4 currently has a head lice problem so can all parents please check their child's hair regularly. The information below is an extract from the Department of Health website

Finding head lice

Many lice do not cause an itch, so you have to look carefully to find them. Head lice are found on the 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 1.5 cm 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 crawl around.

Step 2

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 four or five times.

If lice or eggs are found, the hair should be treated. If the person 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.

Treating head lice

Treating head lice involves removing lice and eggs from the hair. There are two ways you can do this: Buying and using a head lice lotion or shampoo, following the instructions on the product or using the conditioner and comb method until there have been no live lice found for ten days.

The following points may also be helpful:

- *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 applications, seven days apart. The first treatment kills all lice; the second treatment kills the lice that may have hatched from eggs not killed by the first treatment.
- *Cover the person's eyes while the treatment is being applied. A towel is a good way to do this.
- *If you are using a lotion, apply the product to dry hair.
- *If you are using a shampoo, 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.

There is no need to treat the whole family - unless they also have head lice. Concentrate on the head - there is no need to clean the house or the classroom. Only the pillowcase requires washing - either wash it in hot water (at least 60C) or dry it using a clothes dryer on the hot or warm setting.

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.

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.

Preventing head lice

Check your child's head regularly with comb and conditioner. There is no research to prove that chemical or herbal therapies can prevent head lice.