

St. James' Church Pre-School

Head Lice Guide



Notifying Pre-School

Children do occasionally pick up head lice whilst socialising. Should you suspect that these little visitors have invaded your household, please inform the Pre-School staff who can discretely alert other parents to be on the lookout also.

When Pre-School is notified of a case of head lice a notice is placed on the door and a note sent home to parents.

How common are head lice? Who catches them?

Anyone with hair can get head lice, although it is more common in children. Head lice are largely harmless, but can live in the hair for a long time if not treated and can be irritating and frustrating to deal with.

Children are often affected by head lice because they tend to have more head-to-head contact while at school or during play.

Sociable children are the most prone to catching head lice, followed by their friends, siblings and parents. Boys as well as girls may catch them. They are most common in younger children but teenagers can be affected too.

Preventing head lice

It's very difficult to prevent head lice.

As it is fairly common it is a good idea to check your child's hair from time to time and certainly if their school has notified you that there is a problem with head lice within their group or class.

Lotions and sprays don't prevent head lice and should only be used if a live louse has been found.

How you get head lice?

Head lice are spread by direct head to head contact. Once detached from the hair, head lice will usually die within 12-24 hours.

Head lice:

- can't fly, jump or swim
- are very unlikely to be spread by objects such as hats, combs and pillows
- don't have a preference for dirty, clean, short or long hair
- only affect people and can't be caught from animals

How to spot head lice

Head lice can be difficult to spot. The only way to be sure is by finding a living louse. They are very small whitish or grey-brown insects.

The best way to find them is by using a special nit comb. Start by looking behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. They are usually found close to the scalp. They can move quite fast.

How to get rid of head lice

Combing:

1. Buy a proper nit comb with metal or strong plastic teeth and a bottle of conditioner. The conditioner stops the head lice moving.
2. Wash the hair with ordinary shampoo and apply plenty of conditioner.
3. You may wish to let your child watch a favourite TV programme to help them sit still.
4. Use an ordinary, wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
5. Once the comb moves freely through the hair, switch to the head lice comb.
6. Draw the comb down from the scalp to the ends of the hair with every stroke.
7. Check the comb for lice each time and remove lice by rinsing or wiping the comb with tissue paper.
8. Work through the hair, section by section, so that the whole head of hair is combed through.
9. Do this at least twice to help ensure you haven't missed any areas and continue until you find no more lice. Pay particular attention to the areas behind the ears and the nape of the neck.
10. Repeat this process 7 days later to catch any newly hatched lice.

Medicated lotions:

Treatments to get rid of head lice are available to buy from pharmacies, supermarkets and online. Do not use these products unless you are certain there are live lice. Follow the instructions carefully. It is advisable to check the hair again a week after application.

What's the difference between head lice and nits?

Head lice are the insects themselves. The eggs are small cream coloured and oval shaped. They are usually found glued to the hair shaft close to the scalp.

Nits are the empty egg cases of head lice that have hatched. Nits remain stuck to the hair shaft and can be found even after the head lice have all been cleared.

Life cycle of head lice

A louse attaches itself to the base of the hair close to the scalp.

The female louse lays several eggs that are cemented to the base of a hair shaft.

The eggs hatch after about 7-10 days, leaving behind a white eggshell known as a 'nit'.

Lice take 6 to 10 days to become fully grown.

After mating, a female may start to lay eggs as early as the 7th day after she has hatched. So, to break the life cycle and stop head lice spreading, they need to be removed from the head before the 6th day after hatching.

This Policy Document was last reviewed on 29th April 2019. No changes were made.

Signed: Jackie Turton..... on behalf of St. James' Pre-School Committee

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.pediatricscalpcare.org/learn.php>

<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/apr/11/head-lice-nits-children-treatment>