



Managing Head Lice in School – St. Joseph's Head Lice Policy

This document aims to help us to:

- Learn about head lice.
- Reduce anxiety about head lice.
- Discover how to detect them.
- Work together to get rid of them.

Head lice are not dangerous and do not spread disease, but cause anxiety and distress amongst parents.

Head lice are tiny insects about the size of a sesame seed. They move from one person to another by head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. They cannot jump to another person's head. Head lice lay eggs which hatch after 7-10 days. It takes about 10 days for a recently hatched louse to grow into an adult and start to lay eggs.

Nits are the empty white egg shells which are left when the lice hatch. Nits look like dandruff but stick strongly to hair. Unlike dandruff, you cannot easily brush out nits.

Children who get head lice may feel embarrassed or ashamed, but they shouldn't. Anyone can get head lice. It has nothing to do with being dirty or clean and lice do not spread disease or illness.

What you can expect from us:

- Advise parents on the nature of head lice infestations and the means of controlling them (this leaflet).
- Periodically arrange parent information sessions with the School Nurse.
- If staff suspect that a child has head lice, we will ask parents to assess the child A.S.A.P. and confirm whether or not there is a head lice infestation.
- We will refer families to the School Nurse for further support, if required.

What are head lice?

A head louse is a tiny, wingless insect that can attach itself to a person's hair, where it feeds on extremely small amounts of blood from the scalp. They can only move to another head by crawling from hair to hair when the heads physically touch.

Head lice lay eggs around the roots and on the hair – it is the eggs that are more commonly seen in children than the lice.

Some head lice facts.....

- Head lice have nothing to do with cleanliness. Anyone can have lice. Lice love everyone!
- If a person is carrying 20 lice, those lice could lay 2,652 eggs during their reproductive life.
- The eggs take 7 to 10 days to hatch.
- "Nits" are the empty egg of a head louse after hatching.
- "Nymphs" are immature head lice, reaching maturity between 7-13 days. Before this they are unable to lay eggs, or move to another head.
- They can live for up to 40 days.
- Lice are programmed to want to move to another head and can move quickly when disturbed – a louse can travel up to 23cm in a minute.
- They cannot jump, swim or fly, only crawl from head to head, so they are not quite the all action heroes we might think.
- After mating, a female louse can store the sperm in a container in her body, so she does not need to mate again to continue producing eggs.
- Head lice only live on human beings, not on other animals.



Parents' Responsibilities

Mass screening of all pupils in a classroom and/or school does not control the spread of head lice. Rather, the spread of head lice can be minimized with routine inspection for live head lice and nits by all parents and full treatment of those pupils with live head lice.

Parents and guardians are responsible for:

- Knowing head lice signs and symptoms.
- Routinely checking their child's head for head lice once a week.
- Telling their child's school, close friends, etc., that their child has head lice.
- Ensuring that full, proper treatment has been completed before the pupil returns to school.

Advice to Parents

How to Find Head Lice (See Appendix 1)

- Severe itching is the most common sign of head lice.
- Look for head lice and tiny white or grey coloured eggs called nits. Nits look like tiny water drops and are stuck on the hair. They are hard to remove. While nits might signal a live infestation, they don't necessarily mean that live head lice are present; the eggs may have already hatched.
- Check your own head and the heads of everyone who lives in the home.
- Advise school that your child has head lice, also tell the parents of your child's friends to check their child for head lice.

How to treat Head Lice (See Appendix 2)

- Information about special medicated treatments is available from the pharmacist or doctor.
- Only use medicated treatments on your child's head if you find live, moving head lice. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- Do not use medicated treatments if you just find eggs or nits.
- After treating your child's hair, make sure there are no live head lice. If you still find head lice that are moving, go back to the pharmacist or doctor for help.
- You can choose to remove nits from the hair by pulling them off with your fingernails or a special lice comb, but this is not necessary.



After the first treatment parents should:

- Check the child's head to make sure the treatment was successful. It was successful if no live lice are found.
- Speak to a pharmacist about another chemical treatment if you still find live lice.
- Continue to check the child's head every day for 10 days. This is important as eggs that you are unlikely to have seen will continue to hatch.
- Do a second treatment 7 to 10 days after the first successful treatment. Chemical treatments do not completely kill eggs. The second treatment will kill lice that hatch after the first treatment.

After the second treatment parents should:

- Visually inspect the child's head to make sure the treatment was successful.
- Parents can remove any nits if they choose.
- Inspect the child's head every two days for 10 consecutive days.
- After 10 days of inspecting without detecting more live head lice, return to checking the child's head once a week for nits and lice.

How to Prevent Head Lice

Knowledge is one of the most important steps to both prevention and treatment. Parents and school staff both play key roles in preventing head lice. It is important that parents regularly check their child's head (see 'Advice to Parents' above) and encourage their child to follow the advice below -

- Do not share personal items, such as combs, hats and scarves.
- Keep hats and scarves in a coat sleeve or pocket instead of in a spot with other hats and scarves.
- Tie long hair back.
- Check your child's head every week for head lice.

School will –

- Publish this policy on the school website and regularly remind parents to check their child's head.
- Promptly notify parents of active head lice infestations in their child's year group, referring parents to this policy on the website with particular attention to the 'Head Lice Detection Map' Appendix 1.

Head Lice and Absence from School

Having head lice is not a reason for school absence as treatment can be administered quickly. However, should live head lice be noticed by a member of staff, a call will be made to the parent who will be asked to collect the child from school immediately. A thorough comb through or chemical treatment done quickly at home will enable the child to be back at school on the same day (unless of course parents are notified late in the afternoon). If the infestation continues for more than three weeks, the Headteacher will call the parents to discuss what is being done to eradicate the head lice and if necessary will make a referral to the school nurse.

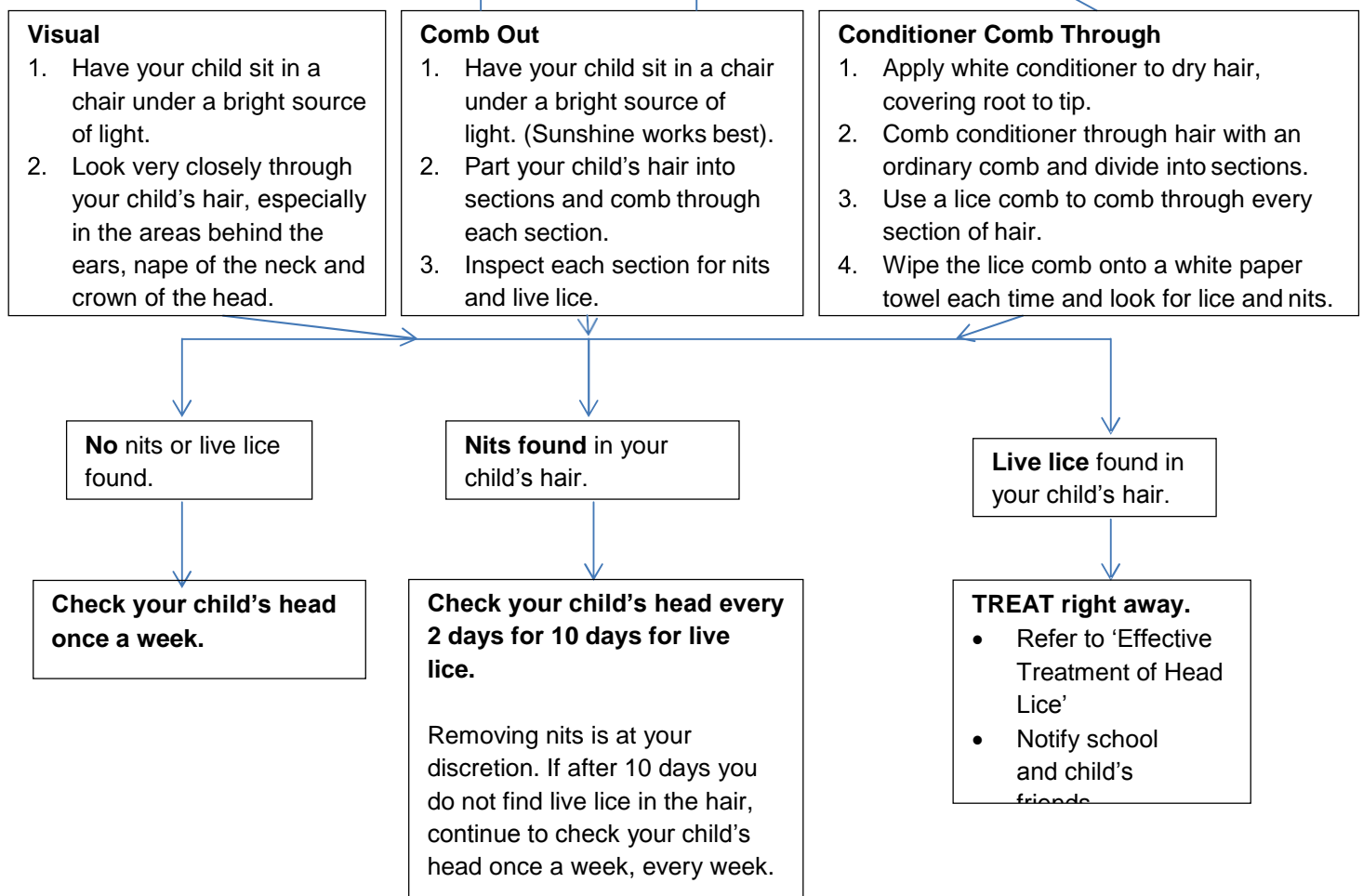
Head Lice Detection Map

If your child has been in contact with a confirmed case of head lice, check your child's head for lice/nits every 2 days for 10 days.

Fast Facts about Head Lice

- Head lice have been a common problem for thousands of years.
 - Head lice do not cause illness or disease.
 - Head lice have 6 strong claws that hold tightly to a hair shaft.
- Head lice can only survive on human heads, not pets or other animals. Head lice or nits are not likely to survive off the head for more than 3 days.
- Head lice do not fly or jump, they crawl from one person to another by close head-to-head contact.
 - Anyone can get head lice.

Check your child's head once a week for live lice or nits using one of the following detection methods,



REMEMBER:

- If live head lice are found start using the 'Effective Treatment of Head Lice' resource sheet.
- Check every family member's head if you find live head lice. Treat only if live head lice are found.
- Inform school and the class teacher.

Effective Treatment of Head Lice

Check your child's head for live lice and nits (Use Head Lice Detection Map)

