

Dear families,

Tackling head lice & nits

As you will know, incidents of head lice in school can be a recurring problem. Therefore we all need to be vigilant to keep on top of the problem. We offer some information below that can help tackle the problem.

What are Head Lice?

A head louse is a tiny six-legged insect. It is approximately the size of a pin head but can become the size of a match head. It is greyish brown in colour but both the louse and the eggs it lays can change colour to match hair colour.

Each leg ends with a claw which grasps the hair which is how it moves around the hair close to the scalp. A louse does not walk on the scalp and has difficulty walking on flat surfaces. The louse feeds only on human blood, approximately five times per day. The louse eggs have an incubation period of seven to eight days, within 7-14 days of hatching the louse becomes an adult, begins to mate, and the females start to lay eggs. Live eggs are skin coloured, whereas the cases of dead eggs (nits) are white and remain glued to the hair.

Sometimes the appearance of a rash at the back of a neck is the first indication of infection. Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim. They are spread by head-to-head contact and climb from the hair of an infected person to the hair of someone else. Children are often affected by head lice because they tend to have more head-to-head contact while at school or during play. Head lice are most common in children between 4 to 11 years old although anyone with hair can catch them.

Common Myths

“Nits prefer clean hair”

They are not bothered. Clean or dirty, it's all the same to them! It's the hair and scalp they go for, not the state it's in.

“There is a Nit Season”

There is no Nit season. Head lice like the warmth of the human head, and there is not much change to scalp temperature between summer and winter.

“Adults do not get nits”

There is a bit of truth behind this one. Head lice are less common in adults than children and more common in primary schools than secondary schools, but adults do get lice, as many parents and teachers can testify.

“Nits make your head itchy”

Not always! Some people have nits but no itchiness – some children who have long term head lice problems seem to become almost immune to the sensation of itching.

So what should I do?

The only thing that really gets rid of head lice is good old fashioned elbow grease! We call this treatment the Wet Hair Method.

- Buy a nit comb (they are available on prescription too)
- Buy the biggest bottle of the cheapest hair conditioner you can find
- Wash the hair with your usual shampoo or nit shampoo
- While the hair is wet, apply plenty of hair conditioner
- Comb the hair using a fine nit comb – comb from the root upwards
- Check the comb for lice and clear away from the comb after each sweep
- Comb all of the hair, a little at a time and carefully

Repeat this **every three days for two weeks** to get rid of any newly hatched lice. With a little time and effort, you can get rid of head lice safely, cheaply and without using any expensive chemicals. **Repeat once per month** to prevent another occurrence & check hair frequently.

For more detailed advice and information you may wish to visit the following website:
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Kind regards

Kettering Park Junior Academy