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**REMEMBER  
ONCE A WEEK,  
TAKE A PEEK**

## Head lice

Many parents are worried about their child getting head lice. It is important to check your child's head for lice regularly and treat them if necessary. Remember that while head lice are unpleasant, they are not a health hazard and there is no reason to keep your child off school.

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## What are head lice?

They are grey / brown insects between one and three millimetres long that live close to the scalp on humans. Each egg is 'glued' to a hair, often near the root. Lice and unhatched eggs are hard to spot.

## What are nits?

Nits are the egg cases left behind when the lice hatch out. They are usually pearly white and are often found above the ears and around the hairline. Both eggs and nits are very difficult to remove from the hair.

## How do lice spread?

When two heads are touching they climb quickly through the hair from one head to another. They don't jump, fly or swim. Lice that fall from the head are dying and harmless. Lice caught on combs can re-establish if they are combed back on to the head again within 48 hours.

## Who can get them?

Anyone with hair. They aren't fussy about clean or dirty hair. Children tend to get them more than adults probably because they put their heads together more than adults do.

## Where do you get them?

Anywhere. Children get them wherever they mix with other children, this can be both in and out of school.

## How do I know if my child has head lice?

The main symptom is itching but you can have head lice for up to six weeks before you notice any itching. The best way to find them easily is to check your child's hair regularly by wet combing.

Wash the hair with your ordinary shampoo. Put on lots of any conditioner and comb it through with an ordinary comb. This makes any lice really wet, which keeps them still.

Then, using a detection comb (a plastic fine tooth comb), slot the teeth into the hair at the roots and draw the comb down to the tips.

Check the comb for lice every time you do this. Continue until you have checked the whole head. Rinse off the conditioner and repeat the combing while the hair is still wet.

## How often should I do this?

It's a good idea to do it about once a week. This means you will be able to treat early if you find them, which helps cut down on the number of people who will get head lice.

## What if I do find lice?

If you find lice, you should check everyone else in the family and treat only those who have them. Also let people who have been in close contact with anyone with lice know, so they can check as well.

## What if I find nits after treatment?

If you find nits but don't find lice, don't treat. Nits will be left behind on the hairs after you have treated but this doesn't mean the treatment has failed.

## What do I use to treat the lice?

The best way to treat is with a lotion. Your GP, some community nurses and some pharmacists can prescribe these free for children. They can also be purchased over the counter in a pharmacy. Treat everyone with lice at the same time so that untreated people don't pass it back those who have been treated.

## Should I keep my child off school?

No. There is no reason for your child to miss out on their education just because of head lice. Keep alert to stop the spread of lice.