



Itchen Abbas Primary School

Growing Hearts and Minds



School Lane
Itchen Abbas
Winchester
SO21 1BE

Telephone: (01962) 779310
www.itchenabbasprimary.co.uk

Facebook: @IAPSUK

Headteacher: Mr. R Bogan

Some cases of head lice have been reported recently and so please could everyone take extra care with checking their children's hair. Below is some information that I hope you will find useful:

Description

The adult head louse resembles a miniature ant that appears flat when viewed from the side through a strong magnifying glass. Head lice have a head, thorax and abdomen with six legs, but their two front legs are very large in order to grab onto the hair shafts. They are tan to greyish-white in colour.



Head louse

Life cycle

Lice eggs on the hair very close to the scalp are the principal sign of an infestation. A female can lay up to 50-150 eggs in its life, but it can lay up to 100 eggs in 30 days. She also glues her eggs, sometimes called "nits", which look like tiny white beads, to hair shafts very close to the scalp (usually about 1 – 2 cm. from the scalp). Eggs are very small, oval and about the size of a full stop in normal printing. Eggs may appear white, yellowish, brownish or greyish, but almost always lighter coloured. An egg normally undergoes a 7-9 day incubation before hatching as a nymph. Dead eggs appear darker, or raisin-like, as they dry out.

Head lice have no wings and move by crawling. They do not have hind legs for jumping.

There are three main stages in the life of a head louse: the nit, the nymph, and the adult:

- *Nit*: Nits are head lice eggs. They are hard to see and are found firmly attached to the hair shaft. Nits take about 1 week to hatch.
- *Nymph*: It looks like an adult head louse, but is smaller. Nymphs mature into adults about 7 days after hatching. To live, the nymph must feed on blood. Most head lice at this stage are almost transparent until they have eaten.
- *Adult*: To live, adult lice need to feed on blood. If the louse falls off a person, it usually dies within 1-2 days.

Symptoms

The most common symptom is itching of the scalp, caused when the louse bites through the skin to feed on blood. The lice themselves are essentially harmless, although excessive scratching may cause bleeding of the scalp, which may increase the risk of infection.

Treatment



Louse Comb

Combing wet hair with a special comb, may be significantly more effective than use of insecticides, and can get rid of lice within 1-2 days of infestation. Regular use of metal head lice combs will prevent major cases of infestation. Suggested use is once every week or two.

The space between the teeth of the comb should be no more than 0.3 mm. Plastic combs are effective for very short-term use, but the spacing between the teeth will quickly spread out after repeated usage. Metal combs, being inflexible, are more effective for multiple uses.

Instructions for wet combing:

- First, comb through wet hair with an ordinary comb to relieve knots and tangles.
- Apply conditioner or olive oil to make it easier to comb the hair with the fine toothed comb.
- Comb through every bit of hair, pulling the comb from the scalp to the hair ends. After every comb-through, examine and rinse the comb. Use an old toothbrush or nailbrush to remove eggs and nits from the comb and flush the eggs down the sink. Comb through the entire head and scalp at least twice, flushing away any lice found. Afterwards, rinse the conditioner out (or shampoo out any oil).
- Repeat the above steps every two or three days to catch any new lice that have hatched since the previous combing.
- Continue to repeat the procedure until lice are not found for at least two treatments in a row.