Facts of Lice

- Head Lice are very small insects, about the size of a pinhead when fully grown. They live very close to the scalp.
- Anyone can get head lice; both adults and children.
- Head lice climb rapidly from head to head.
- Hair can be clean, dirty, short or long – it does not matter to the lice.
- Nits are the empty white egg cases which stick to the hair. These are not lice.
- The grey egg cases contain lice.
- Only if you find an actual living, moving lice, do you have an infestation.
- The majority of head lice infestations are caught from friends and family and not always at school.
- Regular hair care and detection combing once a week is the best way to stop infestations.

Points to Remember

- If you only find nits and no live moving lice, then you do not have head lice.
- The best way to stop infestation is to do detection combing regularly with a plastic detection comb.
- Never use insecticides just to prevent infestation, or ‘just in case’.
- Do not use head lice shampoo or foams / mousses – the overnight lotions are more effective.
- Two treatments, 7 days apart is necessary to kill lice effectively.
- Contact tracing is very important to stop re-infestation. Find out where you got them from in the first place and also find out whom you may have given them to.
- Treat all infested people at the same time.

Useful Contacts

- Family Health Visitor
- General Practitioner
- Practice Nurse
- Pharmacist
- Sure Start Health Visitor
- School Nurse

The picture above shows two lice next to match to show comparison of size
How to detect and treat Head Lice (wet combing)

• Purchase a plastic fine tooth detector comb. These are available from pharmacies and supermarkets. Bug busting kits are available (See your Health Visitor).
• Wash the hair well and leave wet. Put a handful of any type of hair conditioner onto the hair and rub in.
• Ensure you have good lighting – daylight is best.
• Comb the hair through with an ordinary comb first, then using the detector comb, begin at the top of the head, making sure that the comb touches the scalp, and slowly draw the comb to the ends of the hair.
• Wipe the teeth of the comb with kitchen roll after every stroke to check for lice.
• Repeat points 4 and 5 working your way around the head. This should take about 15 minutes.
• If you find something which you are unsure about, then stick it to a piece of paper with clear tape and show it to your Health Visitor, School Nurse, Pharmacist or Family Doctor.
• Rinse the hair thoroughly after combing has finished.
• Repeat the above procedure every 3 days until the infested head is clear of lice and eggs, and then weekly as part of bath time routine.

Treatment of Head Lice

• Do not start treatment unless a living, moving louse is found and your Health Visitor, School Nurse, Pharmacist or Family Doctor has confirmed this.
• If infestation is severe or not responding to wet combing, treatment can be obtained from your Health Visitor, Doctor or Pharmacist.
• Always follow the instructions on how to apply the lotion. The whole scalp should be wet. You do not need to apply the lotion beyond where you would put a ponytail.
• Let the lotion dry naturally. Keep away from naked flames and cigarettes.
• Lotions and liquids must be left on the hair for 12 hours or overnight before washing off.
• Continue to use the wet combing method (please see the previous heading for the procedure) thoroughly each day, then repeat the entire process 7 days later, using a second bottle of the same product.
• If there are still live, moving lice after the second treatment then see your GP for advice.
Options available

If you’d like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this booklet then please call 01253 655588

Patient Relations Department

For information or advice please contact the Patient Relations Department via the following:

Tel: 01253 655588
email: patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk

You can also write to us at:
Patient Relations Department
Blackpool Victoria Hospital
Whinney Heys Road
Blackpool
FY3 8NR

Further information is available on our website: www.bfwh.nhs.uk

References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from: Policy Co-ordinator/Archivist
01253 303397

Travelling to our sites

For the best way to plan your journey to any of the local sites visit our travel website: www.bfwhospitals.nhs.uk/departments/travel/

Useful contact details

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