



Prevention of head lice

Some useful tips and activities that help prevent infestation of head lice are:

- Check your child's hair regularly for head lice and eggs (nits) – use a metal fine tooth comb (nit comb – available from most pharmacies) and plenty of hair conditioner applied to dry hair, to make the task easier.
- Consider applying hair gel or mousse – these do not prevent or repel lice but may help to keep stray hair strands from contact with other heads.
- Avoid sharing combs or brushes.
- Avoid sharing sun hats or swimming caps
- Immerse brushes and combs in hot water for 10 minutes after use to kill any head lice or eggs trapped in them. Using an old tooth brush will also help remove any debris from the comb.
- Remind your child to avoid head to head contact with other children e.g. when working at the computer with others, or when playing, or hugging, not sharing school hats or brushes/combs, swimming caps.



Hairstyles to prevent nits:

- Plait hair tightly into a pony tail or pigtails
- Pull hair up into a bun
- Pull hair back into a pony tail

Ensure that hair is smoothed onto the head – stray hairs can be used for climbing between heads!
Hair can be smoothed onto head with hair spray or gel or a headband.

MYTH BUSTERS–

- Head lice cannot jump, swim or fly. They travel by crawling.
- Head lice live in dirty or clean hair.
- They only live on human heads.
- Head lice can only live for one day if not on a head, so cleaning your house is not necessary, according to head lice experts at Westmead Hospital.
- Household pets and other animals do not spread lice to people.
- Not everyone has an itchy head when they have lice.

Shaving your head is not the best way to get rid of head lice.

Treatment -

Unfortunately Australia has developed some treatment resistant head lice, and the only way to tell is to treat and see if they have died. Treatment will work within 20 minutes, so if lice are alive after 20 minutes then you need a different treatment. Treatments are available from supermarkets and pharmacies, you can also choose to treat hair with plain white conditioner (doesn't matter what brand). A nit comb is essential in the treatment process to remove those pesky nits for good! Please see handout attached for how to treat head lice.

Remember

If your child has head lice, you must do the first treatment before they can return to school.

Need help?

If you are having difficulty with head lice you can talk to your school nurse, doctor or pharmacist.

Emma Atkinson

School Health Nurse/ Registered Nurse

