**Head Lice**

**The duMFacts**

Head lice infestations are a common occurrence, particularly in primary schools.

* about 23% of primary students have head lice at any one time
* anyone can catch head lice regardless of their age, sex, or how clean their hair is
* head lice move from one person's head to another via hair
* head lice do not survive long when they are off a human head
* head lice do not live on furniture, hats, bedding or carpet
* head lice have built up some resistance to head lice treatments

**Treatment**

* daily combing of white hair conditioner using a fine tooth comb is effective in getting rid of head lice and eggs (nits)
* school communities may need to hold 'check and treat' or Nitbuster days where everyone learns about and starts treatment on the same day.

**Tips for parents in reducing the spread of head lice**

As infestations are particularly common in primary schools, it is best to choose a treatment that can be used over time. There is no single solution to eradication, only persistence.

* regularly check your children's hair
* teach older children to check their own hair
* tie back and braid long hair
* keep a fine tooth head lice comb in the bathroom and encourage all family members to use it when they wash their hair.

**What you can expect from your school**

Advice from NSW Health indicates that there is no need for students to be sent home or excluded from school because of head lice.

Observing students scratching their heads is not a reliable or efficient means of assessing head lice prevalence in the school.

Where one student has head lice this serves as a warning light that there is likely to be an infestation in either specific classes or across the whole school population, including staff.

The school will send [a letter home to parents (Ms word 24.5 kb)](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/studentsupport/studenthealth/headliceletter.doc) when infestations of head lice occur and request that parents examine  their child's hair and undertake treatment where eggs or lice are identified.

Schools also provide:

* a venue for parents to get together and work out and where relevant, implement, local strategies
* ways of communicating information about head lice infestations and treatment for parents (eg through school news letters).

They will also encourage students to avoid head to head contact in group activities as far as possible.

In rare cases where students are experiencing a chronic head lice infestation the school, parents and the local community may need to work together to treat the infestation.

School letterhead

School address

Dear Parent/Guardian/Carer

I am writing to advise you that we suspect that nits/head lice are present in the hair of some students within \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ class/group.

Please check your child’s hair for nits/lice tonight using the methods recommended in information from NSW Health (<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/environment/headlice/treatment.asp>) a copy of which is attached.

If you find any eggs or lice please commence treatment as recommended.

Further information on head lice is available on the NSW Health website (details above) or through the Department’s website at <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studenthealth/conditions/headlice/index.php>.

I appreciate your assistance in this regard.

Yours sincerely

Name of Principal/Nominee

Date