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January 2017

HEADLICE GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents.

There are no cases of headlice in school at the moment, but for the safety of everyone we would like to share some information that we have received from West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service in relation to using products to treat head lice.

"We would like to remind parents and carers to always read and follow the instructions carefully when using chemical insecticide products, typically sold in chemists, to treat head lice. This is because these treatments contain flammable elements. You should not therefore use hair dryers, or any other ignition source such as matches, lighters and candles near anyone during the treatment process whilst the product is being used. This advisory note follows a recent incident in West Yorkshire in which a child's hair was accidentally set alight during treatment resulting in the child sustaining serious injuries."

The following are guidelines from the Department of Health about detection and treatment of head lice:

Description

Head lice are small six-legged wingless insects, grey/brown in colour, pin-head size when first hatched and less than match-head size when fully grown. They are difficult to detect in dry hair. They cannot fly, jump or swim but clamber from head to head. They feed by sucking blood from the scalp of their host. They lay eggs that are securely glued to the hair in a warm place, usually near the scalp. Lice take about 6-14 days to become fully grown and are then capable of reproduction. Head lice are not fussy about hair length or condition they will quite happily live on both clean and dirty hair.

Detection

Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo, then use a wide toothed comb to straighten and untangle hair (it is easier to do this with wet conditioned hair). Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the fine-toothed comb (bug buster comb). Check the comb after each stroke as you work through hair, section by section. Do not confuse lice or their eggs with dandruff or other debris. This should be done on a regular basis for early detection.

Treatment

Option 1 – Lotions and crème rinses using insecticides

Do not use lotions or rinses unless you find a living, moving louse.

Check all members of the family to prevent re-infection.

Ensure you have enough lotion to treat all those affected.

The product may be capable of killing eggs, as well as lice, but there is no guarantee of this. So check for baby lice hatching 3-5 days after you use the lotion and again at 10-12 days.

If the lice seem resistant to the treatment, or if the problem persists, then you should seek advice from your health visitor, health centre, pharmacist or GP. You should seek advice anyway if the person being treated is under 1 years old, suffers from asthma, allergies, is pregnant or breastfeeding.

Option 2 – Bug Busting Treatment method

This aims at systematic removal of live lice by combing through the hair and physically removing any lice found. Success depends largely upon adopting a painstaking approach and going through each section of hair meticulously. Combs are available from the school office and chemists.

We hope that this information is helpful to you and your help in checking your child regularly stops the re-infestation of this frustrating little insect! By letting the school know, in confidence, that your child has head lice we can alert other parents to be on the look out for head lice in their child.