**Parent Information –Head Lice**

**Head Lice**

Head lice are a parasitic insect found on the head, eyebrows and eyelashes. They feed on human blood several times a day, live close to the scalp. They have 3 forms: egg (also called nit), the nymph, and the adult. Head lice are not known to spread disease.

Head lice are found worldwide and are most common in pre-school and Elementary school and households of children who have been infested. They are not unique to UNIS and or Vietnam.

**How do they move/how are they spread?**

Head lice move by crawling, they cannot hop or fly. They are spread by direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Head to head contact during play at school, home and elsewhere. It is very uncommon for spread by contact with clothing. Personal hygiene in the home has nothing to do with getting head lice.

**Signs and Symptoms:**

* Tickling feeling or something moving in the hair.
* Itching caused by the allergic reaction to the bites of the head louse.
* Irritability, difficulties sleeping as the lice are most active at night in the dark.
* Sores on the head from scratching.

**Detection:**

Head lice are not preventable but with regular checks, you can ensure early detection. We recommend weekly inspections using the wet combing procedure (same for detection and treatment).

**Treatment Options:**

* Chemical options
* Wet combing

Chemical options contain insecticides and must be treated with caution. They can only be used with live lice – they have no effect on eggs.

**Most important – lice and eggs (nits) must be removed every 3 days to ensure no re infestation.**

**WET COMBING PROCEDURE:**

* Wash the hair in the normal way with shampoo or wet with water.
* Rinse shampoo out and put on lots of conditioner
* Comb hair with normal comb to get rid of tangles
* Change to the detection comb (available in the SHC)
* Place the comb at the base of the hair follicle
* Draw the comb through the hair to the tip
* Work around the entire head repeating the above
* Check the comb for lice after each stroke by wiping on a towel or rinsing the comb in a bowl
* When completed the entire head –rinse out conditioner
* Lice are easier to see in bright light

The first combing should remove all hatched eggs but it will not remove the eggs. Therefore lice that have hatched after the first session may still be three. Repeat every 2-3 days for 2-3 weeks or until no lice found.

Weekly combing should be carried out to prevent/ and or detect any re –infestation

**Commitment:**

Treating and combing for lice is consuming, however, this must be done frequently. Combing remains the responsibility of the parent.

**Exclusion:**

There is much debate regarding exclusion from school. At UNIS we advise that if your child has head lice you:

* Inform the School Health Centre
* Students with live lice will be sent home to begin the treatment and may return to school the following day.
* The school nurse will advise all parents in that class
* A discreet spot check of all students in that class will be attended.

**References:**

Centre for Disease Control and prevention, CDC online access 5th November 5, 2013

[www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head)

UNIS Head Lice Brochure for Parents

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