



School Advisory ~ PEDICULOSIS

4 March 2014

Headlice are nearly always present amongst our community. These insects are a nuisance especially when returning for repeat raids. It only takes a couple to become an invasion. Eradication is nigh on impossible but if families work collectively to monitor and treat as/if necessary their family members and home, then the chances of infestation or reinfestation are substantially diminished.





Headlice crawl from head to head and may be passed on through sharing objects such as hairbrushes, scarves, hats, pillows, bedding etc. It is recommended that you check all members of your household carefully. Anyone can host headlice. Cleanliness is not a factor as to whether headlice are present or not.

Students of history will understand the link made with the photo of Winston Churchill and his most famous ending to a speech made 4 June 1940 quoted here in parts only ... *we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight... on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...*












It seems for some that their family is besieged and perhaps needing all the support and doggedness evident in Churchill's rhetoric. One family on its own cannot meet the recurring invasions of these pests so this is a plea for all of us to work together and actively seek out where these insects are living and take action. We need your help.

What to look for

-  small light or dark brown insects without wings
-  tiny whitish eggs (nits) like grains of salt attached to hair shafts
-  there may be unusual itching on the head or neck
-  small red marks on the neck or behind the ears (headlice bites)




What to do

-  check all members of the household daily at the same time for at least three weeks
-  treat anyone who is hosting headlice - effective treatment need not be chemical or expensive
-  please advise the school if you find headlice and confirm that treatment has begun
-  be prepared to continue treatment for about three weeks depending on the method chosen - three weeks is the length of the headlouse breeding cycle - you need to break the cycle or infestation will continue
-  after each treatment, comb the hair with a fine toothed comb - metal comb is best
-  include washing all bed linen, pillowcases and towels in hot water and tumble dry for twenty minutes on high - other items that have come in contact with heads should also be thoroughly cleaned/washed
-  soak hairbrushes and combs in hot water for at least ten minutes
-  vacuuming carpets and rugs will be helpful

 repeat treatment seven to ten days after initial treatment

Treating the hair is no guarantee that the problem has been eradicated. Success is more likely if treatment is thorough, checking is daily for at least three weeks and children are reminded to avoid head to head contact with others.

What not to do

-  do not use shampoo, conditioner or a hair drier on hair within twenty-four hours of using a chemical treatment - each of these can make the treatment less effective or cause it to fail
-  do not use ordinary insecticides, pet shampoo or flammable petroleum products
-  do not use chemical products if the person applying the treatment or the person being treated is pregnant

Further information can be found by accessing the following links. A digital copy of this is available from the school website.

The school policy

Where/when the school becomes aware there are headlice about, a general advisory is included in the next newsletter (see 154:01 of 12 Feb 2014) and individual parent/s contacted directly. Children are treated at home and are back at school with little adverse impact or time lost. Children are reminded generally about tying hair back, not sharing headgear etc or touching heads. Even if an individual student lets it be known they have pediculosis there appears to be no stigma or ill will from any quarter - as you'd expect.

Technically pediculosis is a communicable disease and as such pupils could be precluded from attending school but invariably treatment is immediate and

The legal position

National Administration Guideline 1(iii) requires schools to report to parents on matters likely to prevent students from achieving. National Administration Guideline 5 requires schools to maintain a safe physical and emotional environment for students. Both of these guidelines mean a school must take some action in the event that it becomes apparent that children are attending school with headlice.

Section 19 of the Education Act 1989 enables the principal of a school to preclude a student who... may have a communicable disease. A communicable disease is defined by the Health Act 1956 and includes pediculosis (lice). A child who is precluded under this section of the Education Act 1989 is neither stood-down nor suspended. Prolonged preclusion of a child would be an unusual and drastic action to take.

It is not the role of the school to conduct mass head inspections, treat children or give expert advice in this area. Inspection, detection and treatment are the role of the parent. Public Health Nurses can also be called upon to assist communities on request.

Useful links

- <http://www.health.govt.nz/.../conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/headlice>
- <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/.../HealthAndSafety/HeadliceAndNitsGuideForSchoolCommunities.aspx>
- <http://dermnetnz.org/arthropods/headlice.html>
- <http://www.kidspot.co.nz/familyhealth/Healthy-Living-Top-ways-to-get-rid-of-head-lice....htm>

A quick search on the internet whoops, internet brings up heaps more information but the only real response is for all to do as Churchill said, "Let us go forward together" with each member of the community taking action on the home front with their preferred method and beating back this tide of little invaders. Best of...

