



Dear Parents / Caregivers

Headlice are present amongst children in your child's class. We hope to minimize the spread/infestation and to break the life cycle of this pest by asking everyone to please check their children and to treat them over the coming weeks.

These insects are a nuisance and can be controlled or eradicated by families. Headlice crawl from head to head and are passed on through shared objects such as hairbrushes, hats and close contact.

It is recommended that you check all members of your household carefully as anyone can host headlice. Cleanliness is not a factor in whether headlice are present or not.

### **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, neck and around the ears.
- Small red marks on the neck or behind the ears (headlice bite).

### **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 this cycle or infestation will continue.**
- After each treatment, comb the hair with a fine toothed nit comb.
- Extra precautions may include washing all bedlinen, pillowcases and towels in hot water and tumble drying for 20 minutes on high. Other items that have come in contact with heads should also be thoroughly cleaned.
- Soak hairbrushes and combs in hot water for at least ten minutes.
- Vacuuming carpets and rugs may be helpful.
- Repeat treatment 7 to 10 days after initial treatment.

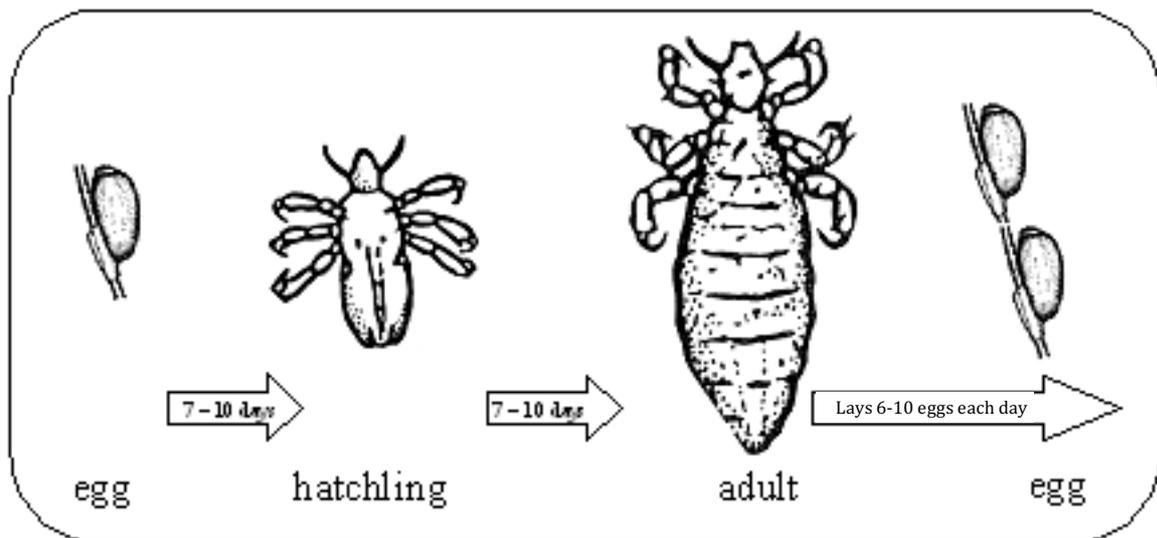
Treating the hair is no guarantee that the problem has been eradicated. Success is more likely if treatment is thorough, checking daily for at least three weeks and children are frequently reminded to avoid head to head contact with others.

### **What not to do**

- Do not use shampoo, conditioner or a hair drier on hair within 24 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.

Thank you for your co-operation. For further information, please view information on the Ministry of Education's website [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz).

Thanking you,  
Darrel Goosen  
Principal



# Lice Myths

## **Myth 1: "Nits prefer clean hair"**

They are not bothered. Clean, dirty it's all the same to them! It's the hair and the scalp they go for, not the state it's in.

## **Myth 2: "This is the nit season"**

There is no nit season. Head lice like warmth of the human head and there is not much change to scalp temperature between summer and winter. They are a year round phenomenon.

## **Myth 3: "Adults do not get nits"**

Head lice are less common in adults than children and more common in primary school than secondary school children but adults do get lice, as many teachers and parents can testify.

## **Myth 4: "Nits make your head itchy"**

Not always! Some people have nits but no itchiness – some children who have a long-term nit problem seem to become almost immune to the sensation of itching.

## **Finally and most importantly...**

## **Myth 5: "A single "nit" treatment will do the trick"**

No, the initial treatment will kill the lice but not their eggs. If treatment is not repeated these eggs will hatch and new lice will be running around the head again. The treatment process must be repeated as per manufacturers instructions!

