



Ysgol Y Faenol, Bodelwyddan

Headteacher/Pennaeth:

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Dear Parent,

Guidance from Public Health Wales advises that school do not send out routine letters to inform parents of cases of head lice within the school. As a school we are always vigilant and if we see a live head louse we always speak to the parents immediately to inform them that treatment is required.

Further guidance from Public Health Wales is included below

Yours sincerely,

Rhian Jones (Mrs.)
Head Teacher

About head lice

Head lice are parasitic insects called *Pediculus humanus capitis*. They only live on the heads of people.

There are three forms of head lice:

- Nits are head lice eggs. The oval, yellowy white eggs are hard to see and may be confused with dandruff. They attach themselves to the hair shaft and take about a week to hatch. The eggs remain after hatching and many nits are empty egg cases.
- Nymphs hatch from the nits. The baby lice look like the adults, but are smaller. They take about 7 days to mature to adults and feed on blood to survive.
- Adults are about the size of a sesame seed. They have six legs and are tan to greyish-white. The legs have hook-like claws to hold onto the hair with. Adults can live up to 30 days and feed on blood. Head lice cannot jump, hop or swim.

Who gets them?

Anyone can catch head lice, but they are most common in preschool children, primary school children and their families.

How do you catch head lice?

Head lice are transmitted through direct, prolonged head-to-head contact with an infested person. This is especially common during play or sport at school and with close contacts at home. Transmission is possible through infected clothes, combs, brushes or towels, but extremely unlikely. The lifespan of a louse is very short once detached from the hair so fumigation is not necessary.

How infectious are head lice?

The rate of transmission is low.

What is having head lice like?

The head lice are most commonly found behind the ears and at the back of the neck. It is rare to find them on the body, eyelashes, or eyebrows. A person with head lice may feel a tickling or itching feeling of something moving in the hair. Most people only realise that they have head lice after the itch has developed which can take from one week to 2-3 months after initial infection. Itching may also occur due to an allergic reaction to the bites. Sores can develop due to scratching and can become infected.

How serious are head lice?

Head lice are not a serious health problem. They rarely cause anything more than an itchy scalp.

Can you prevent head lice?

Head lice are a mild disease. Some schools used to have routine screening, followed by the exclusion of those affected. This was a waste of time as it was ineffective in preventing spread. The best way to stop infection is for people to learn how to check their heads for lice.

Should a child with head lice be kept off school?

No! Guidelines for infection control in schools and nurseries state that there is no need for a child who has head lice to stay away from school. One reason for this is that if a child does have lice, he or she will have had them at school for several weeks before diagnosis. Letters notifying other parents of cases have not been found to curtail spread but often provoke itching and anxiety as a psychological response.

How can you treat someone with head lice?

There are a number of chemical treatments available to buy over the counter from pharmacies. Manufacturers' instructions should be followed carefully when using these products. Alternatively, wet-combing is a technique that can be used to treat and prevent head-lice. More information on the treatment and prevention of head-lice is available on the NHS website.