



St Matthew's School

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Dear Parents,

URGENT

We have discovered some cases of headlice at this school. This is not a cause for serious concern as your child may not be affected, however, headlice are extremely contagious and in the case that it is discovered that your child is infected, parents will be contacted and asked to collect your child from school.

Please check your children's hair **today** for signs of nits/lice, and treat them today. If treatment cannot be effected immediately please keep them home until treatment complete. **Most eggs must be removed before the child returns to school.**

In order to determine if your child has been infected with headlice, we are asking all parents to inspect their child's hair. We suggest that you look for the following symptoms or signs that would indicate the presence of headlice:

- **General: child scratching his/her head excessively.**
- **On pillow: fine black powder or pale coloured material.**
- **In the hair: signs of lice eggs ("nits") – cream or coffee coloured specks close to hair roots.**
- **Lice: small white or "grayish" parasites the approximate size of a pin-head.**

If you notice any of the above signs or if you require any further information, please contact your local pharmacy as treatment is readily available and easy to apply.

We encourage you to ensure that this problem is solved quickly by determining if your child is affected and seeking a recognized headlice treatment or following the 10 day hair conditioner treatment fact sheet attached.

Yours sincerely

Susan Milton
Principal

HOW TO CHECK HAIR EFFECTIVELY FOR HEAD LICE

Why use hair conditioner?

Head lice can move at up to 30 cm per minute – they rapidly run and hide from searching hands and can often be missed. Applying a large amount of hair conditioner to the dry hair ‘stuns’ the head lice and slows them down. They become trapped and can then be easily combed out with the ‘nit’ comb.

You will need:

- A metal ‘nit’ comb. Look for one with long, smooth, cylindrical teeth, about 1mm apart. Your local pharmacist should be able to obtain these for you.
- A bottle of inexpensive hair conditioner. Choose one that is not ‘runny’.
- Some white tissues or paper towels.
- A magnifying glass (optional).

What to do:

- Apply **plenty** of hair conditioner to the dry hair until saturated. Comb through with an ordinary comb or brush to remove tangles.
- Section and comb the hair thoroughly with a metal fine-tooth ‘nit’ comb in 4 directions – forwards, backwards, left, and right. Continue to section and comb the whole head like this.
- Wipe the comb on a white paper towel or tissue as you work, and when completely finished, examine your findings to check for any adult lice or hatchlings. Hatchlings are young lice that emerge from eggs. You may need to use a magnifying glass and a strong light to see lice or eggs.
- Using white hair conditioner may make it easier to see the head lice.
- When combing is completed, rinse the hair conditioner out and dry the hair.

IF YOU FIND HEAD LICE:

If you find head lice in your child’s hair, treat by continuing the hair conditioner method daily, for the next 10 days. Read the Department of Health’s *Head Lice Fact Sheet* for further details (https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Head-lice).

You must also check all other household members for head lice, using the same hair conditioner method. As well, inform the school and any other close contacts that your child has head lice.

NOTE: Other objects in the hair can be mistaken for head lice or eggs. These include sand, cat fleas, ants and aphids or other insects, dandruff, and flakes of hair spray. If you are unsure of the identity of your findings, use clear sticky tape to fix them to a piece of white paper. You can then ask the Community (School) Nurse or the Environmental Health Officer at your local Council to check if they are head lice.