

# THE FACTS OF LICE



teachers  
notes



sponsored by

**Full Marks**

# THE FACTS OF LICE



## teachers notes

The following lesson plans and activities are designed to help teachers explain to children what head lice are, how to deal with them if they are affected, and how to treat other children in the class if they have head lice.

The campaign also aims to involve parents by getting them to support school activities. By doing this, parents will hopefully gain the knowledge they need to help create a shift in attitude towards head lice, their treatment and prevention. Children should be given a leaflet to take home for parents and should be encouraged to discuss this and their class work with parents/guardians.

Schools should think about their own policy on head lice, and if there isn't a policy in place look to create one. One idea could be to look at including head lice in a school 'Health Week' along with everyday illnesses like a cold; so that children get the idea that head lice are just an everyday irritation rather than a big issue.

For more information please refer to [www.headlice.co.uk](http://www.headlice.co.uk)

sponsored by

**Full Marks**



## WHAT ARE WE?

- We're tiny insects that live in your hair – you might not even know we're there
- We're harmless, but we may make your head itch
- We'll live in anyone's hair – clean or dirty, long or short
- We lay eggs after seven days and when we hatch the empty egg shells that stick to your hair are called 'nits'
- Once we hatch we live for about 30 days

## HOW DO YOU CATCH US?

- We can't jump or fly, we crawl
- We're passed on through close head contact (schools are great; there are so many heads to choose from)
- You can't catch us from clothes or bedding, hats or scarves

## HAVE YOU GOT HEAD LICE?

- Need to scratch your head a lot? You might have head lice
- Adults don't seem to itch so much
- You might have white eggs in your hair – check with a grey detector comb
- Our droppings sometimes look like pepper on your pillow

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT US

- Don't panic – we're nothing to worry about
- Head lice are easy to get rid of
- We can be gone after just ten minutes if properly treated
- The Facts of Lice pack helps teachers, pupils and parents learn about us and realise that head lice are just one of those things and nothing to get stressed about



## Best Practice Guide for dealing with Head Lice

The following points are guidance to support schools in dealing with head lice, and to assist in writing and designing a policy on teaching pupils about head lice.

- 1** The Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator and the Science Co-ordinator should plan together to see where teaching about head lice and how to deal with them could fit into the current curriculum.
- 2** All staff (including Classroom/ Support Assistants and administrative staff) should receive information about head lice, either as part of a staff meeting or as a handout.
- 3** Staff should ensure that if head lice are seen on a child or if a child tells a teacher that they have them, then those children should not be made to think that they are 'dirty' or that they have done something wrong.
- 4** The school should decide how to inform parents/carers of a child that has been seen with head lice. A letter could be sent (but it must be written personally and sensitively) or the teacher could have a quiet chat with the relevant parents/carers or make a phone call home. A letter template is provided in the resource pack for your guide
- 5** Regular letters should be sent home to ALL parents/carers encouraging regular weekly checking for head lice. A template is provided in this resource pack.
- 6** The school should decide how and if they want to inform other parents/carers if there is a child in the class with head lice. If the promotion of regular checking has been successful, then this might not be necessary.
- 7** If any bullying incidents occur relating to a child having head lice, it should be dealt with as you would any other bullying incident.
- 8** Schools should support families with English as an additional language by providing information that is visual and clear.
- 9** For more information please refer to [www.headlice.co.uk](http://www.headlice.co.uk)



## Staff Training Sessions

Here are two examples of possible In Service days, staff meetings or training sessions that are designed to help educate school staff about head lice, so that they can pass on the facts and the 'no big deal' message to the children.

### Session 1

Staff should go through the staff quiz provided at the start of the session to find out what they know, and what misconceptions they may have from their own childhoods about head lice.

Explain to the staff that the reason for teaching children about head lice is to educate them and dispel any playground myths – which should also nip any bullying or name calling in the bud. Teachers and children both need to know just how common head lice are, and that most people will come into contact with them.

The main task for staff during the training meeting will be to **design a set of staff guidelines setting out how the school will deal with head lice as a school** – covering how to deal with an outbreak of head lice, and teaching the children about them in advance. This can be drawn up on computer or by hand. The guidelines need to reflect the school's intake of children – and their parents.

Staff should use the website [www.headlice.co.uk](http://www.headlice.co.uk) to support them in drawing up their guidelines.



You could include any or all of the following points in your set of guidelines:

- Head lice are no big deal, just an inconvenience. They don't carry diseases and having them doesn't mean children (or teachers) need to stay away from school.
- Families of children who have head lice need to feel supported and not ridiculed. They need to know that they haven't done anything wrong.
- If teachers spot head lice on a child, they should have a quiet word with the parents/carers and not bring it up in front of the whole class.
- Teachers need to be clear that bullying a child about head lice is as serious as any other bullying incident and will be treated in the same way.
- Families with English as an additional language need extra support so all guidance should be visual and easy to understand.
- Head lice facts - visit [www.headlice.co.uk](http://www.headlice.co.uk) for more information.
- Who is the 'head lice monitor' for the school - the teacher or member of staff tasked with keeping the up to date information as well as distributing the guidelines.



## Staff Quiz on Head Lice

Read the following statements and decide if they are true or false.

1. Head lice need human blood to survive.
2. Head lice spread easily from person to person by direct head to head contact.
3. Head lice have large hind legs which they use to hop and jump.
4. Children whispering secrets at school or families enjoying a cuddle at home provide head lice with the ideal opportunity to travel from one head to another.
5. The female lays eggs that firmly attach to hair close to the scalp and can be very difficult to remove.
6. A rash at the nape of the neck may also develop and is a sign that a child might have head lice.
7. When searching hair for lice, part the hair and look closely, but the lice do move quickly into hiding.
8. If you look in your hair you'll either see white eggs or brown eggs if they have hatched.
9. Head lice are effectively treated with one simple application of medicated solution.
10. People with short hair are less likely to catch head lice.



## Staff Quiz on Head Lice Answers

1. Head lice need human blood to survive.  
True - head lice suck tiny amounts of blood from the scalp.
2. Head lice spread easily from person to person by direct head to head contact.  
True
3. Head lice have large hind legs which they use to hop and jump.  
False, head lice crawl quickly through direct head to head contact.
4. Children whispering secrets at school or families enjoying a cuddle at home provide head lice with the ideal opportunity to travel from one head to another.  
True
5. The female lays eggs that firmly attach to hair close to the scalp and can be very difficult to remove.  
True, it is best to use a fine metal toothed removal comb after treatment.
6. A rash at the nape of the neck may also develop and is a sign that a child might have head lice.  
True, not all people feel the need to scratch. Head lice like to live in warm areas such as the nape of the neck or behind the ears.
7. When searching hair for lice, part the hair and look closely, but the lice do move quickly into hiding.  
True
8. If you look in your hair you'll either see white eggs or brown eggs if they have hatched.  
False - eggs are brown if they have not hatched and are white when they have hatched.
9. Head lice are effectively treated with one simple application of medicated solution.  
False, often a second or third application is required to completely rid hair of head lice. This is to kill any lice that have emerged from eggs since the first application.
10. People with short hair are less likely to catch head lice.  
False - head lice are not at all fussy about the sorts of hair they occupy.



## Staff Training Sessions

### Session 2

- 1) Find a volunteer who is willing to talk about their own or their family's experiences with head lice – you could also discuss the group's childhood memories – 'the nit nurse' and what people remember from their own school days.
- 2) Talk about how things have changed, how treatments and attitudes have moved on, and how head lice should be treated as a common irritation rather than a big problem. Discuss ways to reduce the stigma of head lice.
- 3) Talk about the true and false questionnaires – were there any facts that surprised staff members or any common myths that cropped up a lot?
- 4) Talk about how staff can encourage children to be more aware of head lice, detecting them, treating them, who they should tell about them and how to prevent them coming back.
- 5) Staff could then work together to create a set of school 'head lice rules' that set out how the school will deal with educating the children, keeping up to date on information and treatment, dealing sensitively with an outbreak and other issues such as playground bullying of children who have head lice.
- 6) Teachers should then evaluate together, if and how, the staff meeting has changed their attitude to head lice and if they feel that they are now better equipped to deal with them.



## Assembly

### Start by reading the story

It was just like any other day in class, but Tom felt a bit odd. His head felt really itchy and no matter how much he scratched, it wouldn't go away. He was a bit worried about it and not really paying attention when he went out to play football at lunchtime.

Because he was feeling so uncomfortable, Tom didn't notice as the ball sailed past him and the opposing team managed to score the winning goal. It was a silly mistake, and Tom felt even more fed up when Peter came over to him and shouted at him for not paying attention. Just to make things even worse, he added, "If you hadn't spent all the game scratching your head, maybe you wouldn't have been so useless! Have you got head lice or something?" Tom wanted to cry.

Tom spent the afternoon feeling really grumpy, and couldn't wait to get home so that he could wash his hair. After all, head lice were what dirty people got, weren't they? He didn't want to get into trouble with his mum for being dirty so when he got home he rushed upstairs and washed his hair twice, just to make sure.

The next day, Tom's head was still itching and he really didn't know what to do about it. He felt even worse when Peter came storming over to him and said his mum had found head lice in his hair, and it was all Tom's fault for being dirty and giving them to him. Tom was very upset. He wasn't dirty, was he? He'd washed his hair twice last night!

Stop the story here and ask the children for ideas about what Tom should do next?

Listen to the children's ideas.....



# THE FACTS OF LICE

After Peter had embarrassed him, Tom felt as if he really needed to talk to someone. He didn't want the whole class to think he was dirty! So, he spoke to his teacher, Mrs Jones, who smiled and told him not to worry. This made Tom feel better straight away. She gave him a letter to take home and said "Leave it with me."

Mrs Jones sat the class down and said that she needed to talk to them about head lice. She explained that someone in the school might have them, and that everybody needed to keep an eye on their hair as they spread very easily. She told the class not to worry as they were harmless, and nothing to be ashamed of, just a bit of a pest.

She gave everyone in the class some information on head lice, and explained how to get rid of them, and said it was important for everyone to read the leaflets and to make sure they had their hair checked because head lice spread so fast in schools. She added that it wasn't anyone's fault, they just like warm heads and there are a lot of them at school!

That night Tom's mum helped him put on a special solution that she bought at the chemist and used a removal comb to remove the pests from his hair. The head lice had all gone when he woke up the next day. To make sure that they didn't come back, a week later they put on more of the solution to get rid of any new lice that could have hatched from eggs after the first treatment. And with that, the head lice were all gone!

After the story, tell the children that there are lots of myths about head lice, and that you're going to ask them some questions to find out what they know. Children can put up their hands if they think they know the answer, shouting out 'True' or 'False' when asked.

Then take the class through the True or False answers provided.



## True or False quiz

Who is head of the class? And who does not need to be told twice about head lice

- 1 Head lice are the same size as a grape - FALSE, they are the size of a sesame seed
- 2 Head lice live for 30 days on average - TRUE
- 3 Only kids catch head lice FALSE, anyone can catch head lice
- 4 Head lice can not jump between children - TRUE
- 5 A 'Nit' is another word for head lice - FALSE, it is the empty egg case left when the head louse has hatched

