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HEADLICE NOTICE

Dear Parent/Caregiver

There has recently been a case of head lice identified at the school and we wanted to make sure you were kept informed. While lice are nothing more than a nuisance, it is important that children are checked on a weekly basis so that any head lice can be dealt with quickly and before they are allowed to spread too far.

As there has been an outbreak, we suggest that you check your child's head as soon as possible. Follow the simple **CHECK, TREAT, COMPLETE** routine below to ensure you are doing your bit to keep head lice outbreaks to a minimum.

CHECK

- *Your child's hair once a week.*
- *Use a proper detection comb – with teeth no more than 0.3 mm apart to trap head lice, and white in colour so they can easily be seen.*
- *If you find live lice, consult a pharmacy for treatment advice.*
- *If head lice are spotted, take a close look at all the family, including yourself and ask close family and friends to check as well.*

TREAT

- *Only treat if live lice are identified.*
- *Use a clinically proven treatment, ideally with a physical mode of action to which lice are very unlikely to build up a resistance.*
- *Leave the treatment on for the recommended time for maximum effect – leaving it on for longer will not make it more effective.*

COMPLETE

- *Repeat the treatment for a second time seven days after the first to kill any lice that may hatch from eggs during that time - if the pack instructions specify that a second application is required.*
- *Check that all head lice have gone within two to three days of the final application of head lice treatment to complete the process.*

We have a Robi comb at school for your use if you require it. You will also need to check the rest of your family and treat if affected and wash bedding and hats etc to make sure that they don't spread any further. Please also ensure that you continue to check every few days as no single treatment is 100% effective and follow up treatment and checking is essential to break the cycle. Headlice can spread easily and treatment can be costly and time consuming for all concerned so your prompt attention to this issue is appreciated. If headlice or their eggs are found in your child's hair, your child will need to be treated before returning to school.

Thank you for your co-operation.
The Staff at Maungakaramea School.

Below are some facts and helpful advice regarding headlice and treatment.

Facts

- Head lice are not known to spread disease but they can be annoying because they may cause itching and loss of sleep.
- Head-to-head contact with an already infested person is the most common way to get head lice.
- Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop, fly or jump from person to person.
- Head lice and their eggs (nits) soon perish if separated from their human host. Because they need food, humidity and warmth to survive it is unlikely they will be found alive on car seats, curtains or carpets. clothing or personal items such as combs, brushes or towels.
- No approved treatment will kill all the unhatched eggs. Which is why regular checking and treatment is so important.
- Head lice cannot swim. They can survive under water for several hours but are unlikely to be spread by the water in a swimming pool.
- Anyone can get head lice. It is not related to poor personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home. Headlice feed on blood, not dirt.
- Children do not get headlice from dogs, cats, and other animals.

Treatments

There are a variety of treatments available to families ranging in cost from very cheap to very expensive. Cost is no measure of effectiveness. The best way to break the cycle is regular checking and regular treatment, regardless which option you choose.

Chemical

There are a variety of commercially made shampoo-type preparations for headlice control. These can be purchased from your local chemist, who will also be able to advise on the products available. It is important to follow the directions carefully, they often require repeat treatments.

Physical methods

Physical methods of removing nits and lice can be effective on their own but they are time consuming. Eggs are cemented strongly to the hair shaft and simple washing usually doesn't remove them. Metal nit combs are the most effective way of physically removing the nits.

Wet Combing

The easiest way to find lice is to put lots of conditioner on dry hair – at least three times as much as usual. Conditioner stuns the insects for about 20 minutes and makes them easier to comb out. Repeat the combing at least twice more on consecutive nights if possible and then weekly.

Other tips and tricks (NB: please use at your own discretion these are home remedies parents have told us about but we can not guarantee effectiveness or safety.)

- Some people use vegetable (or olive) oil to help find and/or suffocate the lice, wrapping the hair in gladwrap for 10 minutes then combing thoroughly with a fine comb with the oil still in.
- Others suggest using white or apple cider vinegar first to help dissolve the 'glue' that holds the nit eggs to the hair shaft.
- Another parent uses green Listerine on the hair, then wraps hair in gladwrap and combs, redo in 2 days.
- Physically combing the hair is a very important part of the process. It isn't possible to rely on products alone.
- Tea Tree Oil – a few drops put in your everyday conditioner, or mixed with water and put in a small pump/spray bottle and used daily as a preventative spray.

- Some people suggest the heat from hairdryers or hair straighteners can be helpful in preventing headlice, (not as a treatment for bad infestations).

RECIPE FOR HEAD LICE TREATMENT

5ml Tea Tree Oil approx.

1 cup White Vinegar – or cider vinegar

2 tablespoons Shampoo - or conditioner

Mix ingredients in a clean plastic bottle. Shake well to dissolve essential oil. Apply as much as you need to cover the head, scalp and hair. Cover head with glad wrap. Leave for half an hour. Rinse briefly.

Repeat every 4 days for 5 applications to break the hatching cycle successfully. Combing with a nit comb would be a good idea as well.

Note: *Test for possible sensitivity by putting a little of the final mixture on the inside of wrist or elbow before use.*