The Facts of Head Lice!
Identifying, Treating & Preventing
Head Lice at Gray Street

To reduce the incidence of head lice in our school, parents need to check their child’s hair on a weekly basis, treat their children effectively and feel comfortable to communicate with other parents, office staff and teachers when their children have head lice.

Anyone and everyone can get head lice, regardless of their age, sex or background. Head lice are spread by head-to-head contact with another person who has head lice. Children can get head lice when doing group work at school, playing or hugging.

The aim of this fact sheet is to provide consistent school prevention strategies and guidelines for families to identify and treat head lice.

**DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE HEAD LICE...**
- Often you will notice your child scratching their head more than normal
- Red bite or scratch marks can sometimes be seen at the back of the neck
- Eggs are yellowish white in colour, they are stuck to the hair shaft and may be mistaken for dandruff
- Head lice and eggs are usually close to the scalp, and are particularly common behind the ears and on the back of the neck
- Unless numerous head lice are visible, ‘dry’ head checks are unreliable, due to the speed at which head lice can move
- Lathering the hair in cheap conditioner is the best method of detection. The conditioner stuns the head lice for about 20 minutes and they can then be combed out with a fine-tooth head lice comb
- The conditioning method can be used each week to detect head lice. If live head lice or eggs are found children should be treated using the instructions attached
- If you think your child may have head lice but are unsure, please see Leesa at the school office and she can check your child’s hair for you

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT HEAD LICE...**
- Children’s hair should be tied up at all times to reduce the spread of head lice
- Educate your children about head lice and ask them to let you know if their head is itchy
- Regularly check your child’s hair with a fine tooth head lice comb and conditioner
- If you find your child has head lice, please telephone the school office /admin staff and they will record this in the head lice register (no names will be recorded). The school can then notify other parents with children in the same class that they need to check their children and assess the need for further action if required
- Check all household members to see if anyone else has head lice – using the conditioner method described
- Help prevent their spread by letting others who may have come into contact with your child know that your child has head lice
How are they treated?

There are two treatment options -
1. Conditioner and a head lice comb
2. Chemical lice product and a head lice comb

**Conditioner and a head lice comb**

- Apply normal conditioner to dry hair, ensuring that all of the hair is covered
- Remove the tangles with a large comb and then comb the hair in sections using a fine long tooth metal lice comb (available from chemists or the school office)
- The conditioner does not kill the lice but stuns them for about 20 minutes, making them easier to detect and remove
- The long tooth metal comb will reach the eggs and head lice and pull them off the hair
- Test for active head lice or eggs by wiping the comb on a white tissue. Keep combing until no more appear on the tissue
- This conditioning treatment should be done every second day for 10 days until none remain to remove any new hatchings

Using the conditioner method to manage head lice before they become established on the head is also recommended. Combing conditioner through dry hair on a weekly basis will ensure head lice are “caught” before they lay too many eggs.

**Chemical lice product and a head lice comb**

- If you choose to use a chemical treatment, remember to follow the instructions carefully
- Don’t be tempted to re-apply or over-apply the chemical if it doesn’t appear to be working - instead switch to another treatment that uses a different chemical compound
- Head lice eggs are more difficult to kill because the insecticide may not be able to penetrate the eggshell. You will need to repeat the treatment after seven days to kill any lice from eggs that survived the first application (or as recommended in the chemical treatment instructions)

Note: Long tooth metal lice combs are more effective than the plastic options available. Research also suggests that bed linen, hats, clothing and furniture do not harbour or transmit head lice or eggs and that there is no benefit in washing them as a treatment option. Eggs and head lice only live on the human head. They quickly dehydrate and die if removed from the head.

If you have any questions, or need help identifying head lice in your child’s hair, Leesa in the school office is happy to assist.

The school also has a limited supply of lice treatment chemical and combs that it can provide at no charge to Health Care Card holders.

Thank you for assisting us to manage head lice in our school community.