

Dear Caregiver,

Head lice are very common in the community and we have noticed that some of the children attending the programme have head lice at the moment.

Please read the ministry of health information sheet below. It is important that you check your child's hair and treat for head lice if required, to help prevent head lice spreading.

Check the hair of every member of your household. If you find live head lice on anyone, treat them as well. We suggest you do not treat everyone "just in case".

It is a good idea to wash hair ties and brushes but you do not need to wash bedding or pillows.

Thank you for your co-operation.

What are head lice?

Head lice are also called nits, kutis, kutu bugs, headlouse or cooties.

Head lice are small flat insects, about 2–3 mm long. They live on the scalp (the skin on a person's head where the hair grows from). Head lice lay their eggs (nits) on strands of hair.

Anyone can get head lice – it doesn't matter how clean or dirty a person's hair is. Head lice spread by crawling from one person's hair to another's – usually between people who are in close contact, such as family or school classmates.

Head lice:

- cannot jump, fly or swim
- do not carry disease
- stay on the scalp after swimming or bathing/showering.

What do head lice look like?

Insects

Head lice can be white, brown or dark grey. They are usually in the hair at the back of the neck or behind the ears.

Eggs (nits)

Female head lice lay about 7–10 eggs each night. The eggs are small and hard (like a grain of salt) and are normally pale grey in colour. Eggs are laid close to the scalp and are normally pale grey in colour. Eggs are laid close to the scalp and are firmly glued to strands of hair. After hatching, the empty egg cases are white.

Eggs hatch in 9 days, and head lice live for 40 days.

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