

BIOLOGICAL AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL INFLUENCES IN HEAD LOUSE CONTROL FROM AN UK PERSPECTIVE.

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In the UK, legislation, which even today perpetuates the belief that dirt generates lice, places a duty on parents to keep schoolchildren free of head lice, *Pediculus capitis*. For a century 1890-1990 nurses checked schoolchildren, excluding those with obvious nits (empty louse eggshells) in their hair to protect (E)clean, pupils from contamination by the (E)verminous,, continuing even after scientific investigation revealed that the many light, contagious cases (10 lice or less) escaped their notice. These inspections were withdrawn in the 1980s but the right of children to free anti-lice treatment and the obligation of the primary care team to advise parents remain. A health charity, Community Hygiene Concern, has worked to build an informed partnership between health, education and parents against the louse. Exploiting its biological weaknesses, we have developed the child-friendly Bug Busting method to enable parents to detect a low level of infestation reliably. This has progressed to a low-cost re-usable treatment. The Bug Buster Kit is recommended by the Department of Health as an alternative to insecticide medication and to assess the efficacy of medication if that is preferred. Participation in the national Bug Busting Days, which we organise to prevent the endless circulation of head lice, is encouraged.