

9. Lice

9.1 Headlice

The investigation took place from June 1997 to May 1998. Questionnaires were returned from 70% of the pharmacies and 80% of the school health care systems in this country. Of the questionnaires distributed to children from selected schools and institutions in Copenhagen and Silkeborg, parents have replied to 48%.

More than half the school health care professionals are of the opinion that problems with headlice have been increasing within the last five years. Among the children having participated in the investigation, 33% have had lice once or more during the year the inquiry has covered. In many cases also the rest of the family had lice if the child had lice - mainly the mother and/or the younger brothers and sisters.

There are more cases of lice among children aged 3-10 years compared with children aged 11-15 years. Problems with the occurrence of lice are spread all over the year; however, there is still a marked "lice season" in August, September, October and November.

Most often headlice are found among children with rather long or quite long hair compared with children having rather short or quite short hair. In the investigation, a considerably greater part of the girls than the boys had lice. In the light of the material collected, the explanation for this is the fact that there are more long-haired girls than boys. Only among the quite short-haired children, more had lice in the school youth centres compared with children staying in other places after school.

Most parents comply with the request from school or nursery school to examine their children for lice. However, only half of them do this regularly or spontaneously.

The majority of the information about headlice given to parents comes via school health care systems and/or pharmacies. School health care systems and pharmacies mainly receive information about lice from drug producers and the Danish Pest Infestation Laboratory. Both parents, pharmacists and school health care professionals point out that all information and recommendations from authorities and drug producers must be identical.

Pharmacies and school health care systems look for more information about the development of resistance to the lice remedies marketed.

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