



Head Lice

Rationale:

Head lice (pediculosis) are tiny, wingless insects that live on the human scalp where they feed and breed. Probably between 2-3% of primary school children are infested at any one time. While they do not carry or transmit disease, they are a cause of head itch and scratching, which may lead to infection and swollen lymph glands; therefore, they need to be controlled.

Aims:

To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.

To ensure effective processes for treating head lice are well known and consistently followed.

To ensure that parents and guardians are well informed about head lice and their treatment.

Implementation:

- Anyone can catch head lice. Head lice cannot fly, hop or jump. They spread from person to person by head to head contact, and may also be spread by the sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes and hats. The students are educated not to share these items.
- While it is parents who have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice on their children, the school will assist by offering up-to-date information and by alerting parents of head lice when detected.
- The school principal will ensure all teachers and aides are provided with professional development regarding head lice, who will then be authorised to carry out visual checks of students' heads for head lice (observations without touching of the student's head or hair). The principal will also identify specific staff members to carry out head lice inspections (physical examinations) of student's head and hair for the presence of head lice.
- On enrolment parents are asked to sign a permission form allowing their children to be inspected by our specific staff members for the presence of head lice. Only children whose parents have signed the permission form will be inspected, however, all students may be visually checked.
- Consistent with Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, School Exclusion Table the principal will ensure that the parents of any child found to have live head lice are informed that their child is to be excluded from attending school until appropriate treatment has commenced. **Note:** The presence of eggs in the hair is not a cause for exclusion (only live head lice).
- Exclusion under the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 refers to exclusion of children from school until the day after appropriate treatment has started. In the case of head lice, appropriate treatment refers to treatment that removes live lice. For instance,

the use of combing and conditioner can constitute appropriate treatment. If a child re-attends school with live lice they can again be excluded until the live insects have been removed.

- When the child is returning to school parents are to communicate with the school that treatment has begun.
- The principal will provide parents of children found to have live lice with information about head lice treatment and prevention.
- When a student is identified with live head lice the parents of other students in the same class as the affected child/children will be alerted of the infestation. **Note:** The Department of Health and Human Services indicates at any one time there are likely to be cases of head lice in most schools, so it is not advocated that the principal informs the whole school community each time head lice are detected.
- The principal will ensure that information relating to the prevention and eradication of head lice appears throughout the year in the school newsletter, particularly at times of heavy infestations.

Related legislation

Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001

Resources

For more information about head lice recognition and treatment see:

- Department of Health and Human Services: [Scratching for Answers](#)
- Better Health Channel: [Head Lice \(nits\)](#)

Review Cycle and Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle

Ratified by School Council: September 2019

Next review: October 2021