



SOPHIA
MUNDI

The Inner City Steiner School P-12

Head Lice Policy

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1. Policy

1.1 Purpose

Head lice continue to cause concern and frustration for some parents/guardians, teachers and children. This policy is intended to outline roles, responsibilities and expectations of the school community to assist with treating and controlling head lice in a consistent and coordinated manner.

Whilst parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice our school community will work in a cooperative and collaborative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively.

2. Procedures

2.1 Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians and Families

It is the expectation of parents/guardians and families attending this school that:

- Children's hair will be checked for head lice on a weekly basis, at home, using the recommended conditioner/combing detection method;
- Children do not attend school with untreated head lice (in accordance with the *Health Infectious Diseases Regulations 2001*);
- All household members will regularly be inspected and then treated if necessary;
- Parents/guardians will notify the school if their child is found to have live lice and advise when appropriate treatment was commenced (in accordance with the *Health Infectious Disease Regulations 2001*);
- Children with long hair will attend school with their hair tied back;
- Parents/guardians will only use safe and recommended practices to treat head lice;
- Parents/guardians will notify the parents or guardians of their child's friends so they have an early opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary;
- Parents/guardians will maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;
- Parents/guardians will act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community especially around issues of head lice;
- Parents/guardians will sign an agreement accepting the terms of this *Head Lice Policy*.

2.2 Responsibilities of the School

To support parents/guardians and the broader school community to achieve a consistent, collaborative approach to head lice management the school will undertake to:

- Distribute up to date and accurate information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents and staff members at the beginning of the year or more frequently if required;
- Include information about head lice management in orientation and transition programs for new families/staff members attending the school;
- Include information and updates in school newsletters;
- Include annual head lice updates for staff in-service programs;
- Provide practical advice and maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;
- Abide by the recommendations of the school exclusion policy of the *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001* in that the responsibility to exclude a child from the school rests with the Principal and only children with live head lice will be excluded from school;

- Ensure that any person employed by the school, or volunteering, to undertake 'head lice inspections' will adhere to the school policy and latest Department of Human Services information and *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001*;
- Only inspect the heads of children whose parents/guardians have given written consent;
- Respect the wishes of parents/families who elect for their children not to participate in a school head lice check;
- Accept the advice of parents/guardians that appropriate treatment has commenced;
- Encourage children to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or 'bullying' associated with the issue;
- Request that all families attending this school sign an 'agreement' to accept the conditions of the school's *Head Lice Policy*;
- Be aware of real difficulties some parents may encounter and seek extra support if required;
- Review the school's *Head Lice Policy* annually and seek endorsement from the School Board/community;
- Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community especially around issues of head lice;
- Continue to seek opportunities to increase our collective understanding of and response to managing head lice.

Appendix A Scratching for Answers

This information is obtained from the Information Pamphlet and Management Guidelines 'Scratching for Answers' available from www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/faq.htm

Where do head lice come from?

Head lice have been around for thousands of years. As with any insect, they learn to adapt to their environment in order to survive. We are never going to be completely rid of them, but we can make managing them easier.

Do head lice fly or jump?

Head lice do not have wings so they cannot fly. They can't jump because they do not have 'knees'.

So how do head lice move around?

Head lice CRAWL very fast and require head to head contact for transmission. It is possible that because of the way young children play, head lice are seen more widely amongst primary school children than adolescents or adults.

Can head lice spread disease?

No. A head lice infection is not a life threatening health condition – like similar health conditions such as scabies, and ringworm, it is a parent or guardian's responsibility to treat and care for their child.

Do head lice live in carpets, clothes, hats or sheets?

No. Head lice very rarely fall from the head. They require blood to survive. Head lice feed 3-4 times a day and without blood, will dehydrate in 6 hours in a dry climate and 24 hours in a humid climate. An egg requires warmth to hatch and is the reason why they are laid close to the scalp. The further away from the scalp, the less likely they are to survive.

Is it true that head lice only like clean hair?

No. Head lice are not selective. They don't care if hair is long, short, blonde, brown, washed this morning or last week. As long as they are warm, and have blood to drink, then they are content.

What treatment kills 100% of head lice or eggs?

There is no single treatment that kills 100% of head lice or eggs. Whichever treatment you choose it can take time and persistence to get rid of head lice. Use a method that will not risk the health of your child.

Is there a way to prevent head lice?

No, not that we know of. It's important to check your child's head regularly with conditioner even when you don't think your child has head lice. There is no research to prove that chemical or herbal therapies can prevent head lice.

How does the conditioner and comb method work?

It's a very cheap and effective way of finding head lice. Hair conditioner does not kill lice, but it does stun them for about 20 minutes, meaning they do not move around, and it is difficult for them to hang on. This gives you time to comb through the hair with a lice comb.

How does a chemical treatment work?

Only use products that are licensed or registered for head lice. There are four different active chemicals that target head lice, each works differently and aim to kill lice and/or eggs.

Do some products work better than others?

Over time, head lice may develop resistance to some chemicals. It is important to check if a treatment you used has worked, and if not, treat again with another product that has a different chemical.

Why do you have to treat again in seven days' time?

Head lice eggs take 6-7 days to hatch and when you treat, it's easy to miss an egg or two. By treating again in seven days, you are aiming to kill and comb out any lice that have since hatched from eggs, which were missed.

Should I treat everyone in the family?

It is important to check each family member, using conditioner and comb, for head lice but only treat those with live lice.

What should I wash or treat at home?

As head lice only live for a short time off the head, the only extra cleaning needed is to wash the pillowslip on the hot cycle or place in clothes dryer. Head lice combs can be cleaned in water hotter than 60 degrees.

Why does my child keep getting re-infected?

Re-infection is the least likely reason for head lice returning in a week's time. If eggs do not die, or were not removed during the original treatment they may hatch and the lifecycle occurs all over again. To break this lifecycle you must re-treat (regardless of treatment method) seven days after the first treatment and continue with weekly checking.

Does my child have to miss school?

According to the *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001*, children with head lice may be readmitted to school after head lice treatment has commenced. A certificate from a doctor or council is not required before your child goes back to school. Children do not catch head lice from school; they catch it from other children when they gather together at schools. Head lice are not the fault of schools.

Helpful hints...

- Using the conditioner and comb method every week is the best way to detect head lice early and minimise the problem.
- Tying back hair can also help prevent the spread of head lice.
- Many parents will complain that they are doing the right thing but other parents aren't. Placing the blame will not achieve anything. Instead of pointing the finger, help each other.
- A school with a head lice education program and policy in line with *Scratching for Answers?* is a proactive school attempting to help families address a common health concern.

Treatment choices

- **Chemical**

Treat and comb to remove the head lice and eggs; and repeat in 7 days

- **Non-chemical**

Use conditioner and comb to remove the head lice and eggs; and repeat every 2 days until no live lice have been found for 10 days.

Head Lice Management Agreement Form

Sample from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development can be found here:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/health/headlice/actiontaken.htm>

HEAD LICE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CARERS

(Insert school details)

Head lice continues to cause concern and frustration for some parents/guardians/carers, teachers and children. Head lice do not transmit infectious diseases – they are transmitted by having head to head contact with someone who has head lice. Whilst parents have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, the control and management of head lice infections is a shared responsibility amongst a number of agencies, including the Department of Education and Training; Department of Human Services; schools and parents. The Department of Education and Training is responsible for providing advice and support to schools regarding head lice management.

This agreement outlines the:

- Responsibilities of both the school and the parent/guardian/carer;
- Importance of an all inclusive health approach, to ensure an appropriate and efficient solution to the problem of head lice.

Responsibilities

Parent/Guardian/Carer - responsibilities include:

- Regularly (preferably once a week) inspecting their child's hair to look for lice or lice eggs and regularly inspecting all household members and then treating them if necessary;
- Ensuring their child does not attend school with untreated head lice;
- Using safe treatment practices which do not place their child's health at risk (see the attached *Treating and Controlling Head Lice* pamphlet).
- Notifying the school if their child is affected and advising the school when the treatment has started via an *Action Taken* form;
- Notifying parents or carers of your child's friends so they too have the opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary.

I have read and agree to the above responsibilities:

Signature of parent/carer/guardian: **Date**.....

Signature of parent/carer/guardian: **Date**.....

School - responsibilities include:

- Distributing policies and information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents/guardians/carers and staff and having accessible clear protocols for the inspection program that the school implements;
- Developing a school policy on head lice which reinforces an accurate, consistent approach to the management of head lice infections, which is approved by the school council;
- Obtaining written parental consent to conduct head lice inspections, upon the enrolment of a student to cover the duration of their schooling at a particular school and to nominate a trained person/s to conduct the head lice inspections, who is approved by the Principal and school council;
- Encouraging those person's authorised by the school principal, e.g. teacher, to visually check a student's hair, i.e. with no physical contact with the child, if the presence of head lice is suspected;
- Encouraging parents/guardians/carers to continue to regularly (preferably once per week) check their child for head lice and providing a sympathetic attitude and practical advice to those parents experiencing difficulty with the control measures;
- Encouraging students to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or 'bullying' associated with the issue;
- Being aware that the responsibility to exclude a child from a school rests with the principal or person in charge of the school and being aware that exclusion only refers to those children who have live head lice and does not refer to head lice eggs; and being aware of the recommendation that students should be excluded from school at the conclusion of the school day where the student should be provided with a note to take home to inform the parent that their child may have head lice.
- Being aware that there is no requirement in the *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001* for a child treated for head lice to obtain a clearance certificate to be issued either by a general practitioner or a municipal council, on return to school.
- Where appropriate, and at the principal's discretion, providing an alert notice to the school community, when head lice has been detected in the school;
- Encouraging parents/guardians/carers to identify treatment used and the commencement date, via an *Action Taken form*.

(insert name of school) is committed to managing head lice in a sensitive and confidential manner. We are committed to the above responsibilities.

Signature of Principal **Date**.....

Head Lice Inspection Consent Form

(Date)

Dear Parent,

Head Lice

The school has today found evidence of an outbreak of head lice in your child's class. Whilst parents have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, our school hopes to work in a co-operative and collaborative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively.

Under our school policy we will only inspect the heads of children whose parents have given written consent. We do, however, ask that:

- Children's hair is checked at least on a weekly basis at home. We recommend the conditioner/combing detection method
- Health regulations require that where a child has head lice, that child should not return to school until the day after appropriate treatment has started
- All household members are regularly inspected and treated if necessary
- Parents who find head lice notify the school and advise when treatment has commenced
- Children with long hair attend school with hair tied back
- Parents work together as a group to tackle head lice to enable early detection and treatment and avoid stigmatising families
- Parents sign the authority below enabling the school to inspect for head lice

I have attached some information about head lice obtained from the Information Pamphlet and Management Guidelines 'Scratching for Answers' available from www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/faq.htm

Yours truly,

(Insert name)
Principal

Authority for the school to inspect for head lice


I, Legal guardian of (Student at Sophia Mundi),
agree to allow him/her to be inspected by the school for head lice.

Signed:



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Head Lice Inspection Result Form



Head lice are here again.

(Not actual size)


(Date)

Today (Insert Teacher's name) checked the heads of Class (insert #) children as requested.

.....

found nothing found eggs found lice not checked

Please check or recheck your child's head and treat as necessary before they return to school. Head lice thrive in this changing weather. As head lice are often very hard to see, we ask that your children's hair is checked at least on a weekly basis at home and recommend the conditioner/combing detection method. Health regulations require that where a child has head lice, that child should not return to school until the day after appropriate treatment has started. (Insert Teacher's name)



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