



SOPHIA
MUNDI

Steiner Education and IB World School

Head Lice Management Procedures

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1 Policy

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.

Schools must:

- obtain written consent of parents/guardians prior to students being inspected for head lice
- exclude infected students until the day after treatment has commenced.

2 Purpose and Background

The purpose of these procedures is to minimise outbreaks of head lice.

3 Scope

The application of this procedures is relevant to the principal, school staff; students and parents / guardians involved in the management of head lice infestations.

4 Definitions

Pediculosis – Scientific name for human head lice

5 Procedures

Head Lice (Pediculosis) are transmitted by having head to head contact with someone who has head lice. Head Lice is not a notifiable condition and head lice do not transmit any infectious diseases. Lice spread from person to person by head to head contact, and by the sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes and head wear such as hats.

Information references:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/disease-information-advice/head-lice>

Appendix A – ‘Scratching for Answers’

5.1 School communications and responsibilities

The Principal (or their delegate ie: class teacher or school guardian) will ensure that information relating to prevention and eradication of head lice appears throughout the year in the school newsletter. This may include 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.

Appendix B – Newsletter notice of head lice outbreak (example)

Department of Health – Treating and Controlling Head Lice pdf

The school will ensure that any person employed by the school, or volunteering, to undertake ‘head lice inspections’ will adhere to these school procedures and only inspect the heads of children whose parents/guardians have given written consent.

5.2 Parent/guardian consent

The school will request consent to head lice inspections as part of the enrolment process.

The consent must be updated when:

- guardianship or custody arrangements change for the student
- parents/guardians no longer wish to consent to inspections

Otherwise, the parent consent form applies for the duration of the student's enrolment at the school.

5.3 School head lice checks

Checks for head lice are made by people authorised by the principal, e.g. classroom teachers and occur via:

- Visual checks without physical contact. These do not require parent/guardian consent
- Routine Head lice inspections involving the examination of a student's head
- Parents are informed that a head lice inspection has taken place

5.4 Exclusion of students

Students identified with live head lice should be:

- Excluded¹ from school until the day after treatment has commenced, as noted in the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001, School Exclusion Table.

1. The Principal has the overall responsibility to exclude a student from school.

5.5 Detection and treatment responsibilities

Parents and legal guardians

Responsibilities for managing head lice are shared between parents/guardians, schools and principals.

Parents/guardians have primary responsibility for detection and treatment of head lice.

Parents/guardians should:

- regularly, preferably once a week, check for lice or eggs in the hair of their child and all household members
- notify the school: if their child is affected and when treatment commenced
- not send their children to school with untreated head lice
- 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 the school's Head Lice Procedure

Schools must:

- exercise sensitivity towards students and families with head lice
- maintain student confidentiality to avoid stigmatisation
- support and provide practical treatment advice to parents/guardians.
- alert parents/guardians of an infestation, particularly the parents of other students in the same class as the affected child/children
- use discretion about informing the school community about an infestation.

6 Sophia Mundi - Procedures to be Read in Conjunction with this Policy

Student Health - Management Procedures

Privacy - Management Procedures

7 Relevant Legislation

Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001

Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulation 1990

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009

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.

Appendix B Newsletter Notice of Head Lice Outbreak (example)

We have been advised of a case of Head lice in Class X. In line with the school's Head lice Policy, we ask that you as parents / guardians regularly check, detect and if necessary, treat head lice.

Please check your child's hair tonight and if head lice are present, begin treatment immediately. Your child must not attend school until the day after treatment has commenced.

Please also be aware that no treatment kills all the eggs. The process must involve two applications, seven days apart. The first treatment kills all lice; the second treatments kills the lice that may have hatched from eggs not killed by the first treatment.

Please see the attached Victorian Government information sheet for further information and support. Thank you for your ongoing assistance.