

HEAD LICE POLICY

Rationale

Head lice have been associated with humans for 10,000 years. Head lice occur worldwide. Anyone can get lice, and, given the opportunity, head lice will move from head to head without discrimination. They are frequently associated with children – girls are more frequently infested than boys.

Information on the prevalence of head lice varies around the world. In 2002, the prevalence of head lice among primary school children in Victoria was found to be 13 per cent. Females were more than twice as likely to have head lice as males.

The prevalence of head lice in primary school-aged children in other parts of Australia is reported to be up to 60 per cent. Mount View Primary School acknowledges that it has a responsibility to create environments and encourage behaviours to minimise the spread of headlice within our community.

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. Mount View Primary School recognises the importance of supporting parents/guardians/carers to control the outbreak of head lice.

Aims

- 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.
- How to find and treat head lice.

Implementation

RESPONSIBILITIES

Parent/Guardian/Carer - responsibilities include:

- Regularly (preferably once a week) inspecting your child's hair to look for lice or lice eggs and regularly inspecting all household members and then treating them if necessary;
- Ensuring your child does not attend school with untreated head lice;
- Using safe treatment practices which do not place your child's health at risk (see section on treating head lice).

- Notifying the school if your child is affected and advising the school when the treatment has started via an email to class teacher or school nurse;
- Notifying parents or carers of your child's friends so they too have the opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary.

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 upon the enrolment of a student and the beginning of each school year to conduct head lice inspections.
- Encouraging those person's authorised by the school principal, e.g. teacher, school nurse to visually check a student's hair, 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;
- Contacting parents in the event that live lice are seen, and asking parents to collect their child from school as soon as possible. The student can return to school the next day after being appropriately treated.
- 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 via compass;
- A commitment to help reduce stigma and maintain confidentiality following head lice inspections, e.g Whole classes will be checked.

FINDING HEAD LICE

Many lice do not cause an itch, so you have to look carefully to find them. Head lice are found on the hair itself and move to the scalp to feed. They have six legs which end in a claw and they rarely fall from the head. Louse eggs (also called nits) are laid within 1.5 cm of the scalp and are firmly attached to the hair. They resemble dandruff, but can't be brushed off. Lice can crawl and hide.

The easiest and most effective way to find them is to follow these steps:

- Step 1 Comb any type of hair conditioner on to dry, brushed (detangled) hair. This stuns the lice and makes it difficult for them to grip the hair or crawl around.
- Step 2 Comb sections of the hair with a fine tooth, head lice comb.
- Step 3 Wipe the conditioner from the comb onto a paper towel or tissue.
- Step 4 Look on the tissue and on the comb for lice and eggs.
- Step 5 Repeat the combing for every part of the head at least four or five times.

TREATING HEAD LICE

Treating head lice involves removing lice and eggs from the hair. There are two ways you can do this:

Buying and using a head lice lotion or shampoo, following the instructions on the product
Using the conditioner and comb method (described under 'finding head lice') every second day
until there have been no live lice found for ten days.

If you choose to use a head lice product always read and follow the instructions provided with the product carefully. The following points may also be helpful:

1. Head lice products must be applied to all parts of the hair and scalp.
2. No treatment kills all of the eggs so treatment must involve two applications, seven days apart. The first treatment kills all lice; the second treatment kills the lice that may have hatched from eggs not killed by the first treatment.
3. Cover the person's eyes while the treatment is being applied. A towel is a good way to do this
4. .If you are using a lotion, apply the product to dry hair.
5. If you are using a shampoo, wet the hair, but use the least amount of water possible.
6. Apply the treatment near the scalp, using an ordinary comb to cover the hair from root to tip.
7. Repeat this several times until all the hair is covered. There is no need to treat the whole family - unless they also have head lice.
8. Concentrate on the head - there is no need to clean the house or the classroom. Only the pillowcase requires washing - either wash it in hot water (at least 60°C) or dry it using a clothes dryer on the hot or warm setting.

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated October 2025.

Principal, Justine Mackey