



Morwell Central Primary School

Head Lice Policy 2018

Head Lice continue to cause concern and frustration for some parents, teachers and children. This school 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 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 – as cited in *Scratching for Answers? Frequently asked questions* – Department of Health

Rationale:

Head lice (pediculosis) are tiny 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.

Head Lice cannot fly, hop or jump. They spread from person to person by head to head contact. They do not live in carpets, clothes, hats or sheets. Without blood they will not survive more than 6 hours. Pillowslips are the only item that needs to be washed in hot water or put through a hot dryer.

Aims:

The aim of this policy is to:

- To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.
- To ensure that an effective process for treating head lice is well known and consistently followed.
- To ensure that parents and guardians are well informed about head lice treatment.
- To actively promote a positive attitude towards those with head lice.

Expectations of parents and carers attending Morwell Central Primary

It is expected that parents and carers:

- Check children's hair for head lice on a regular basis at home, using the recommended conditioner/combing detection method and if live lice are detected treat hair.

- Ensure children do not attend school with live head lice (in accordance with Health Infectious Diseases Regulations 2001); *Appendix 1*
- Will check their child/children more than once, as often one treatment is not sufficient to manage an outbreak. **2 treatment applications must be complete 7 days apart.** It is also recommended that a conditioning treatment be used every 2nd night for 10 days after the initial treatment is completed.
- Should regularly inspect all household members and then treat them if necessary;
- Will notify the school if their child is found to have live lice (in accordance with Health Infectious Disease Regulations 2001); *Appendix 1*
- Complete and return the cut off slips to school indicating treatment of their child / children has been completed.
- Sign an agreement upon enrolment, accepting the terms of the School Head Lice Policy.
- **Who have children with long hair will attend school with hair tied back;** Tying back hair does not prevent head lice but it does help stop the spread.
- Will use treatments that are safe and recommended for treating head lice;
- Will notify their child's friends & family if they have been in contact, as an early opportunity to detect and treat their children is greatly appreciated;
- Receive a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;

Support for parents and carers

The school will support parents and carers by:

- Distributing up to date and accurate information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents and staff as required;
- Including information about head lice management in orientation and transition programs for new families/staff attending the school;
- Including information and updates in school newsletters;
- Providing practical advice and maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising /blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;
- Abiding by the recommendations of the School Exclusion Policy of the Health (Communicable Diseases) *Appendix 2* Regulations 2001 in that the responsibility to exclude a child from the school rests with the principal or person in charge, and
- Excluding children from school with live insects; Children can return to school once treatment has been commenced and no live lice are present.
- Encouraging children to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or 'bullying' associated with the issue;
- Requesting that all families attending this school sign an 'agreement' to accept the conditions of the school's head lice policy;
- Being aware of real difficulties some parents may encounter and seek extra support if required;
- Reviewing the head lice policy annually and seek endorsement from the School Council /Community;

- Acting responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community especially around issues of Head Lice;
- Continuing to seek opportunities to increase our collective understanding of and response to managing head lice.

Leadership and Co-ordination

The School Principal and School Council will:

- Nominate a Head Lice Resource / Support person who parents can contact at the school.
- Provide regular training of appropriate school personnel in detection and management of head lice.
- When students need to be sent home: Parents and carers will be notified by phone where it is practicable by office staff that their child needs to be picked up from school and treated.
- If phone contact is not able to be made the student will be sent home with a letter outlining that treatment is to be carried out before returning to school.

Monitoring and Assessment

School Inspection Program:

- Ensure that any person employed by the school to undertake 'head lice inspections' will adhere to the school policy and latest Department of Human Services information and Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001;
- If a student is seen to have live headlice or is scratching and feeling uncomfortable, they will be inspected. Before any inspections are conducted staff will explain to student what is being done and why, and it will be emphasised to the student that the presence of head lice in their hair does not mean that their hair is less clean or will be kept than anyone else's. It will also be pointed out that head lice can be itchy and annoying and if you know you have got them, you can do something about it.
- The person conducting the inspections will physically search through the student's hair to see if any lice or eggs are present.
- When a student who is sent home with live lice returns to school they will be checked by the nominated staff member of the Learning Hub. If live lice are still present the family will be contacted to pick up their child. Support on treatment will be given by nominated staff.
- The school will only inspect the heads of children whose parents have given prior consent;
- Respect the wishes of parents and carers who elect not to participate in a school head lice check.

Resources

This school policy draws on information obtained from:-

- The Department of Health: Head lice - Scratching for Answers?

- The Department of Health: Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009
- <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/head-lice>

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - The Department of Health: Scratching for Answers? – Frequently asked questions

Appendix 2 – The Department of Health: Treating and Controlling Head Lice

Evaluation:

This Head Lice Policy will be reviewed as part of the school's four-year review cycle or earlier as required.

This policy was last ratified by School Council

19th March 2018

Head lice Scratching for Answers?

health

Frequently asked questions

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. Head lice cannot transmit or pass disease on to people.

Who is responsible for checking and treating head lice?

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 three to four times a day and without blood, will dehydrate in six 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. It's important to check your child's head regularly with conditioner and comb 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 fine tooth (head 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 aims 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 in it.

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

Head lice eggs take six to seven 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 head 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 starts 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 Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, children with head lice can 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. Head lice are not the fault of schools, other families or children.



www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice

Information and photograph used are courtesy of Assoc Professor Rick Speare and the team of researchers at the School of Public Health, James Cook University, Queensland.

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 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.
- The department's head lice management strategy is supported by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Treatment choices

- Chemical: Treat and comb to remove the head lice and eggs; and repeat in seven days.
- Non-chemical: Use conditioner and comb to remove the head lice and eggs; and repeat every two days until no live lice have been found for 10 days.



Treating and controlling headlice

health

While children are at school many families will have contact with head lice. The information contained here will help you treat and control head lice.

Catching head lice

Head lice have been around for many thousands of years. Anyone can get head lice.

Head lice are small, wingless, blood sucking insects. Their colour varies from whitish-brown to reddish-brown. Head lice only survive on humans. If isolated from the head they die very quickly (usually within 24 hours).

People get head lice from direct hair to hair contact with another person who has head lice. This can happen when people play, cuddle or work closely together.

Head lice do not have wings or jumping legs so they cannot fly or jump from head to head. They can only crawl.

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** Now 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.

If lice or eggs are found, the hair should be treated.

If the person has been treated recently and you only find empty hatched eggs, you may not have to treat, as the empty eggs could be from a previous episode.

Treating head lice

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

1. Buying and using a head lice lotion or shampoo, following the instructions on the product
2. 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:

- Head lice products must be applied to all parts of the hair and scalp.
- 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.
- Cover the person's eyes while the treatment is being applied. A towel is a good way to do this.
- If you are using a lotion, apply the product to dry hair.
- If you are using a shampoo, wet the hair, but use the least amount of water possible.
- Apply the treatment near the scalp, using an ordinary comb to cover the hair from root to tip. 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.

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.

Testing resistance

Head lice products belong in one of the following categories depending on the active compound they contain:

- pyrethrins
- synthetic pyrethroids (permethrin, bioallethrin)
- organophosphates (maldison or malathion)
- herbal with or without natural (non-chemical) pyrethrins.

Insecticide resistance is common, so you should test if lice are dead. If they are, treat again in seven days using the same product. If the lice are not dead, the treatment has not worked and the lice may be resistant to the product and all products containing the same active compound. Wash off the product and treat as soon as possible using a product containing a different active compound. If the insecticide has worked, the lice will be dead within 20 minutes.

Any head lice product could cause a reaction and should be used with care by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, children less than 12 months old and people with allergies, asthma or open wounds on the scalp. If you are unsure, please check with your pharmacist or doctor.

Head lice combs

Combs with long, rounded stainless steel teeth positioned very close together have been shown to be the most effective, however, any head lice comb can be used.

Head lice eggs

Head lice eggs are small (the size of a pinhead) and oval. A live egg will 'pop' when squashed between fingernails.



Dead eggs have crumpled sides and hatched eggs look like tiny boiled eggs with their tops cut off.

Regulations

According to the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, children with head lice can be readmitted to school or children's service centres after treatment has commenced.

The department recommends a child with head lice can be treated one evening and return to school or children's service centres the next day, even if there are still some eggs present. There is no need to miss school or child care because of head lice.

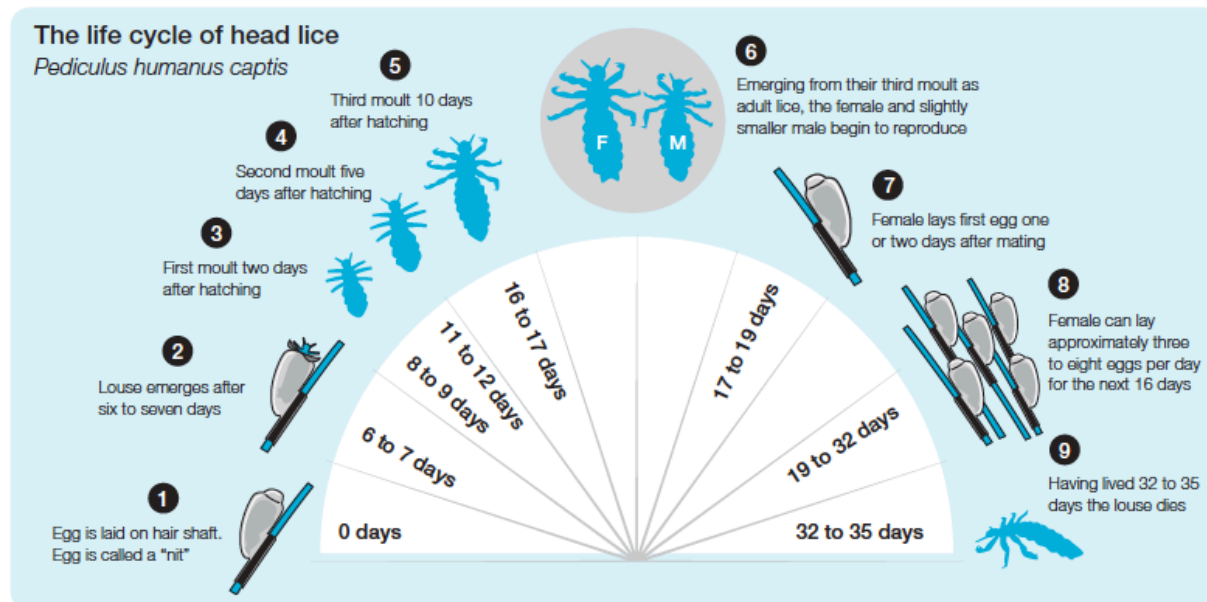
Preventing head lice

Check your child's head regularly with comb and conditioner. There is no research to prove that chemical or herbal therapies can prevent head lice.

Further information

The following website offers further information:

www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice



The information in this pamphlet is based on the research conducted and written by Associate Professor Rick Speare and the team of researchers at, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, James Cook University.

Cover concept by students from St Patrick's Primary School, West Geelong. Life cycle diagram courtesy of Nitpickers Qld.
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Treating and controlling head lice