

Head lice continue to cause concern and frustration for families, Educators and children. Although head lice are not considered a health hazard, and do not spread disease, infestations can cause anxiety for all stakeholders. Head lice affect all socioeconomic groups and are not a sign of poor hygiene. They have no preference for ethnic background, hair colour, hair type or age. This policy is intended to outline roles, responsibilities and expectations of the Centre to assist with early identification, treatment and control of head lice in a consistent and coordinated manner.

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

Our Centre aims to:

- Outline the roles and responsibilities of families, educators and management who are involved in detection, treatment and control of head lice.
- Educate participating agencies regarding the activities of other agencies in order to provide a framework for an effective way to deal with and control head lice.
- Document effective treatment and management strategies that are vital, as head lice cannot be exterminated. These guidelines represent the systematic community approach that is necessary, as head lice infections are as much a social issue as they are an educational or health issue.

Head Lice

Pediculus Capitis or head lice are insects that live in hair and suck blood from the scalp, sometimes causing itching of the scalp. Female head lice lay their eggs and glue them to the base of hair shafts. The eggs are pale cream to yellowish brown in colour and hatch after 7–10 days. The immature lice grow into adults over 6–10 days and start biting the scalp to feed on blood. Adult lice mate, the females lay more eggs, and the cycle continues.

People get head lice from direct head to head 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.

Head lice do not live or breed on animals, bedding, furniture, carpets, clothes or soft toys. They cannot spread by sharing hats.

Head lice can be controlled through a consistent, systematic community approach.

Finding Head lice

Head lice do not necessarily cause an itch, and may be difficult to observe. Look for eggs by shining a strong light on the hair near the scalp, or by using the conditioner and combing technique. (See Treatment) Head lice are found on the hair shaft itself and move to the scalp to feed. They can be brown or grey in colour. Head lice have six legs, which end in a claw, and they rarely fall from the head. Louse eggs (also called nits) are laid within 1.5cm of the scalp and are firmly attached to the hair. They resemble dandruff, but can't be brushed off.

Children do not have to be sent home immediately from the Centre if head lice are detected. The child may return to the Centre as soon as 'effective treatment' has started. An effective treatment is when a treatment is used and all the lice are dead.

Responsibilities of Management, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisors and Educators:

- If one child at the Centre has head lice, it is likely that several others also have them.
- The child or children with head lice is not to be isolated — it does not make sense and can be humiliating for the child.
- Exclude a child from the Centre only if live head lice is detected and re-commence care once appropriate treatment has commenced.



- Reduce head-to-head contact between children when the Centre is aware that someone has head lice.
- Keep families informed if there is someone at the Centre with head lice.
- Support parents and children who have head lice by providing factual information, reducing parental anxiety and not singling out individual children with head lice.
- Record confidentially all cases so an outbreak can be avoided
- Encourage children to learn about head lice so as to help them understand the issue and how to prevent further outbreaks

Responsibilities of families:

- Check your child's head once a week for head lice.
- If you find any lice or eggs, begin treatment immediately.
- Check for effectiveness of the treatment every 2 days until no lice are found for 10 consecutive days.
- Children are not to attend the Centre with untreated head lice. Children with live lice will be sent home immediately. (Children with only eggs present will also be sent home immediately and must not return until treatment has commenced)
- You may send your child back to the centre as soon as effective treatment has started.
- All household members will regularly check and treat if necessary. (Families will notify the Centre if their child is found to have live lice so the Centre can monitor the number of cases and act responsibly if a high number of cases are reported.)
- Children with long hair will attend the centre with their hair tied back
- Families will only use safe and recommended practices to treat head lice
- Families will maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid defaming/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures
- To contact and inform the Centre as soon as lice are detected and treatment has started so the Centre can monitor cases and act responsibly

Treatment

- Adult lice are difficult to see; look for eggs by shining a strong light on the hair near the scalp, or using the conditioner and combing technique:
 1. Untangle dry hair with an ordinary comb.
 2. Apply hair conditioner to dry hair (white conditioner makes it easier to see the eggs). Use enough conditioner to cover the whole scalp and all the hair from roots to tips.
 3. Use an ordinary comb to evenly distribute the conditioner, and divide the hair into four or more sections using hair clips.
 4. Starting with a section at the back of the head, place the teeth of a head lice comb flat against the scalp. Comb the hair from the roots through to the tips.
 5. Wipe the comb clean on a tissue after each stroke and check for head lice or eggs on the tissue.
 6. Comb each section twice until you have combed the whole head. If the comb becomes clogged, use an old toothbrush, dental floss or a safety pin to remove the head lice or eggs.
- The conditioner and combing technique is also an effective head lice treatment. Keep combing the whole head until all the conditioner is gone. Repeat the process daily until no lice or eggs have been found for 10 days.
- Chemical treatments are also available for head lice—your pharmacist can help you choose a product
- No single chemical treatment will work for everyone and lice can develop resistance to the chemicals

Source: Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014), Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations, ECA Code of Ethics, Guide to the National Quality Standard, National Privacy Principles, Privacy Victoria www.privacy.vic.gov.au, United Nations Convention of the Rights of a child, Privacy Act 1988, Head Lice, Management Guidelines Fact Sheet, Staying Healthy in Child Care. 5th Edition, Victoria State Government.
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/headlice.aspx>,

Date Implemented: 16/04/2012

Review Completed: 15/04/2019



National Quality Standard – NQS		
Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child’s wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s needs for sleep, rest and relaxation
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
Education and Care Service National Regulations		
88	Infectious Diseases	

