

## Head Lice Policy

This policy is current as at August, 2022 and is based on the following specialist sources:

- Privacy Act 1988
- Staying Healthy in Child Care 5<sup>th</sup> edition
- Head Lice Management Guidelines Fact Sheet
- Child Care Cooperative – Help! I don't know what to do about head lice.
- Head lice management guidelines – Health. Vic.gov.au

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, colour of hair, hair type or age. This policy is intended to outline roles, responsibilities and expectations of the service 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 Service will work in a cooperative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively.

Our Service aims to:

- Outline the roles and responsibilities of families, educators and management who are involved in early detection, treatment and control of head lice.
- Document effective treatment and management strategies that are vital, as head lice cannot be exterminated
- Provide information and support for families.

## Head Lice

Head lice are insects that live in hair and suck blood from the scalp, sometimes causing an 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 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. 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 cannot be brushed off.

### **Responsibilities of Management, Nominated Supervisor, 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 are not to be isolated or excluded from learning.

- Reduce head to head contact between all children when the Service is aware that someone has head lice.
- The Director or Nominated Supervisor will confidentially notify the parent/caregiver of a child who is suspected of having live head lice and request that the child is treated before returning to the Service the following day.
- Keep families informed if there is someone at the Service 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
- Provide families with suggestions of effective treatment for head lice.
- Encourage parents to tie back children's hair when attending the Service
- 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 and check for head lice.
- Ensure your child does not attend the Service with untreated head lice. If you find any live lice or eggs, begin treatment immediately and notify the service.
- Check for effectiveness of the treatment every two days until no live lice are found for 10 consecutive days. Remove eggs from your child's hair using the conditioner method and head lice comb.
- Once treatment has started, your child can attend the Service.
- 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.

### **Treatment:**

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 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 the 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 or safety pin to remove the head lice or eggs.

Chemical treatments are also available for head lice for children over six months of age – your pharmacist can help you choose a product.

No single chemical treatment will work for everyone and lice can develop resistance to the chemicals.