



## Headlice

### 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.
- Anyone can catch head lice. Head lice cannot fly, hop or jump. They spread from person to person by head to head contact and may also be spread by the sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes and hats.

### Aims:

- To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.
- To ensure effective processes for treating head lice are well known and consistently followed.
- To ensure that parents and guardians are well informed about head lice and their treatment.

### Implementation:

- Schools will obtain informed written consent of parents/guardians prior to students being inspected for head lice
- While it is parents who have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice on their children, the College will assist by offering up-to-date information and by alerting parents of lice when detected.

### **Parent/guardian consent**

- A pro forma consent form will be provided to parents for completion as part of enrolment, which obtains parent/guardian consent to head lice inspections. The consent applies for the duration the child is at the school. The proforma will be updated when:
  - Guardianship or custody arrangements change for the student.
  - Parents/guardians no longer wish to consent to inspections.

### **Visual headlice checks**

#### Visual checks without physical contact:

- Don't require parent/guardian consent.
- Are made by people authorised by the Principal (e.g. classroom teachers).

#### Head lice inspections involving the examination of a student:

- Require written parental consent, usually obtained at enrolment.
- Are made by people authorised by the Principal and school council (e.g. school nurse).

## Exclusion of students

Students identified with live head lice should be:

- Provided with a note to take home to inform the parent/carer that their child may have head lice at the conclusion of the school day.
- Excluded from school until the day after treatment has commenced, as set out in the *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001, School Exclusion Table*.

**Note 1:** Principal has the overall responsibility to exclude a student from school.

**Note 2:** The presence of eggs in the hair is not a cause for exclusion. There is no requirement for a general practitioner or local council to issue a clearance certificate in order for the child to return to school.

## Detection and treatment responsibilities

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 and should regularly check for lice or eggs in the hair of:

- Their child and all household members.
- Notify the school if their child is affected.
- When treatment commenced.
- Not send their children to school with untreated head lice.

### 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.

### Principals must:

- 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. The Principal (or nominee) will provide parents of children found to have live lice with information about head lice treatment and prevention. A letter will be sent to the families of the year level concerned to maintain privacy. (Appendix A)
- Exclude infected students until the day after treatment has commenced.

**Note:** The Department of Human Services don't advocate that the Principal informs the whole school community each time head lice is detected.

## References

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/health/pages/headlice.aspx>

## Related legislation

- Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001

## Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

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<b>Approved by Kambrya College School Council</b>	May 2018
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Paul Looker- Assistant Principal and Nicole Topp- School Nurse
<b>Next Review Date</b>	May 2021

## Appendix A: Example School Letter



Tuesday 13th February, 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians/Carers,

It has come to my attention that some students in the school may have head lice and I seek your cooperation in checking your child's hair **tonight or as soon as possible**.

Head lice do not transmit infectious diseases – they are transmitted by having head-to-head contact with someone who has head lice.

You may be reassured to know that head lice are commonly found in places other than at Kambrya College, and they are common in school aged children.

### **What can you do?**

I seek your cooperation in checking your child's hair and in those instances where head lice or eggs are found, treating your child's hair.

Please see the attached pamphlet *Treating and Controlling Head Lice*, from the Department of Human Services. This pamphlet has informative guidelines regarding detecting and treating head lice and eggs.

### **How do I treat my child for head lice?**

The attached pamphlet (as noted above) has informative guidelines regarding detecting and treating head lice and eggs.

### **If head lice or eggs are found on your child's hair you need to inform:**

- The school and advise when the treatment has started,
- Parents or carers of your child's friends so they too have the opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary.

### **When can my child return to school?**

Health regulations requires that where a child has head lice, that child should not return to school until the day after appropriate treatment has started. Please note, this refers only to those children who have live head lice and does not refer to head lice eggs.

Kambrya College is aware that head lice can be a sensitive issue and is committed to maintaining your confidentiality.

Yours Sincerely,

Keith Perry  
Principal

*Maximising the potential of each student*

Integrity

Respect

Compassion

Achievement

**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.

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.