

Note: This policy is a sample only that incorporates recommended practices. Please read it to ensure it is appropriate to your needs and make any amendments and additions as required. Delete this paragraph from your customised version.

Head Lice continue to cause concern and frustration for some parents, teachers and children. This childcare policy is intended to outline roles, responsibilities and expectations of the childcare 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 childcare community will work in a cooperative and collaborative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively.

This childcare policy draws on information obtained from the Information Pamphlet and Management Guidelines ‘Scratching For Answers’.¹

It is the expectation of parents/carers and families attending this childcare centre that:

¹ www.dhs.vic.gov.au/phd/headlice

- Children’s hair will be checked for head lice on a weekly basis, at home, using the recommended conditioner/combing detection method;
- That your child does not attend childcare with untreated head lice (in accordance with Health Infectious Diseases Regulations 2001);
- Regularly inspect all household members and then treat them if necessary;
- Parents/Carers will notify the childcare if their child is found to have live lice and advise when appropriate treatment was commenced (in accordance with Health Infectious Disease Regulations 2001);
- Children with long hair will attend childcare with hair tied back;
- Use only safe and recommended practices to treat head lice;
- Notify the parents or carers of your child’s friends so they have an early opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary;
- Maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;
- Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the childcare and broader community especially around issues of head lice;
- Sign an agreement accepting the terms of the Childcare Head Lice Policy.

To support parents/carers and the broader childcare community to achieve a consistent, collaborative approach to head lice management the childcare will undertake to:

- Distribute up to date and accurate information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents and staff at the beginning of the year or more frequently if required;
- Include information about head lice management in orientation and transition programs for new families/staff attending the childcare;
- Include information and updates in childcare newsletters;
- Include annual head lice updates for staff in-service programs;
- Provide practical advice and maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;
- Access community educational resources and support, such as primary childcare nurses, community health centres and local government;
- Abide by the recommendations of the School and Children's Service Centre Exclusion Policy of the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001 in that the responsibility to exclude a child from the childcare rests with the person in charge of the centre, and
- Only exclude children from childcare who have live insects;
- Accept the advice of parents that appropriate treatment has commenced;
- Encourage children to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or 'bullying' associated with the issue;
- Request that all families attending this childcare sign an 'agreement' to accept the conditions of the childcare's head lice policy;
- Be aware of real difficulties some parents may encounter and seek extra support if required;

- Participate in a Head Lice Local Area Network to work with other childcares, childcare centres, health services and pharmacists in our Local Government Area to achieve consistent management and policy across sectors;
- Review the head lice policy annually and seek endorsement from the Childcare Council/Community;
- Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the childcare and broader community especially around issues of Head Lice;
- Continue to seek opportunities to increase our collective understanding of and response to managing head lice.

There is no requirement for any childcare to undertake ‘head-lice inspection’ programs however those that do, need to consider the following as additions to a childcare head lice policy:

- Ensure that any person employed by the childcare, or volunteering, to undertake ‘head lice inspections’ will adhere to the childcare policy and latest Department of Human Services information and Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001;
- Only inspect the heads of children whose parents have given prior consent;
- Develop a generic/blanket consent form which parents sign at commencement of childcare year;
- Respect the wishes of parents/families who elect not to participate in a childcare head lice check;

- To help reduce the stigma and maintain confidentiality when conducting head lice inspections a letter should be given to all the children involved;
- Include teachers and childcare staff in inspection.