

Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001



Pediculosis is **not a notifiable condition** and head lice **do not transmit any infectious diseases**. Head lice are transmitted by having head to head contact with someone who has head lice and this happens frequently in families, schools and childcare centres.

The School Exclusion Table regulated by the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001, was developed to protect the public health by preventing, or containing, outbreaks of infectious conditions common in schools/children's service centres.

Exclusion criteria for various diseases have differing importance based on the public health risk – this risk is determined by the consequences of contracting a particular condition or disease and the way it is transmitted or passed from person to person. As an example, the risk from measles differs significantly to the risk from head lice.

While head lice are not considered an agent for infectious disease they are included on the school exclusion table. The exclusion criteria for head lice should be interpreted as:

- **At the conclusion of the school day, provide the child with a note to take home to inform their parents that they have head lice. Children may return to school after treatment has commenced.**

There is no requirement in the Regulations for a clearance certificate to be issued either by a general practitioner or a municipal council. The exact wording of these regulations can be found at <http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/>

School head lice programs

In the previous Regulations (1990) there was a specific regulation allowing particular municipal council employed staff, to conduct head lice inspections without parental consent. There was, however, no requirement for councils to provide this service. This power was not extended to school staff or community nurses.

- Encouraging parents to **frequently check their children for head lice** using white inexpensive hair conditioner on dry hair will help to control head lice in your community. Dry hair examinations **alone** are of little benefit in the control of head lice.

However if your school or childcare centre **wants** to have an inspection program various options are available including:

- 'Parent managed head lice programs' are working successfully in many schools. Guidelines for starting and implementing up a parent or school run program are available from the resources section of <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice>
- Municipal council programs are available in some municipalities; many of these operate on a fee for service basis — check with your municipal council.

Some schools and councils have raised the issue of obtaining consent from parents for head lice inspections. There is no statutory requirement (under the Health Act 1958 or Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001) to obtain such consent for head lice inspections. The Department of Education and Training have advised schools that parental consent is required.