

# Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009

*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: this happens frequently in families, schools and childcare centres.

The School Exclusion Table, regulated by the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, protects public health by preventing, or containing, outbreaks of infectious conditions common in schools/children's service centres.

The exclusion criteria for various diseases are based on the public health risk: 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 is quite different to the risk from head lice.

While head lice do not spread disease they are included on the school exclusion table. The exclusion criteria for head lice should be interpreted as:

**At the end of the school day, provide the child with a note to take home to tell their parents that they may have head lice. Children can 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 council. The exact wording of these regulations is at <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>

## School head lice programs

In previous Regulations 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 inexpensive white hair conditioner on dry hair will help 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 running a parent or school run program are available from the resources section of <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice>
- Some local councils offer head lice inspections; these may operate on a fee for service basis — check with your local 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 Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 or the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 to obtain consent for head lice inspections, however the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development have advised schools that parental consent is required.