

# Head Lice Policy

*Head lice continue to cause concern and frustration for families, Educators, and children. This policy is intended to outline roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the Service to assist with treating and controlling 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 and collaborative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively.*

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY	
Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
Safety	Each child is protected.
Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

## EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law NSW	
77	Health, hygiene, and safe food practices
88	Infectious Diseases
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

## PURPOSE

To ensure parents, staff and educators are well informed about the early identification of head lice and managing infestations through effective treatment and communication with families.

Our Service aims to

- Outline the roles and responsibilities of families, educators and management who are involved in detection, treatment, and control of head lice.

- Educate participating agencies regarding the activities of other agencies to provide a framework for an effective way to deal with and control head lice.
- Document effective treatment and management strategies.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

## HEAD LICE

*Pediculus Capitis* or head lice are insects that live in hair and suck blood from the scalp, causing 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 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.

Head lice do not live or breed on animals, bedding, furniture, carpets, clothes, or soft toys. They cannot spread by sharing hats.

## 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.

They can be brown or grey in colour. 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 can't be brushed off.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Responsibilities of Management, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person and Educators:

- If one child at the Service has head lice, it is likely that several others also have them.
- The child or children with head lice is not to be isolated — it can be humiliating for the child.
- 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.
- Reduce head-to-head contact between children when the Service is aware that someone has head lice.
- Keep families informed if there is someone at the Service with head lice.
- Support parents and children who have head lice by providing information, reducing parental anxiety, and not singling out individual children with head lice.

- Record all cases so an outbreak can be avoided.
- Encourage children to learn about head lice to help them understand the issue and how to prevent further outbreaks

### Responsibilities of families

- Check your child's head once a week for head lice.
- If you find any lice or eggs, begin treatment immediately.
- Check for effectiveness of the treatment every 2 days until no lice are found for 10 consecutive days.
- Children are not to attend the Service with untreated head lice. Children with live lice will be sent home immediately. (Children with only eggs present will not be sent home immediately as only live lice are able to spread but must not return until treatment has commenced)
- You may send your child back to the service as soon as effective treatment has started.
- All household members will regularly check and treat if necessary. (Families will notify the Service if their child is found to have live lice so the Service can monitor the number of cases and act responsibly if a high number of cases are reported.)
- Children with long hair will attend the service with their hair tied back.
- 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 having trouble with control measures.
- To contact and inform the Service as soon as lice are detected, and treatment has started so the Service can monitor cases and act responsibly.

### TREATMENT

- Adult lice are difficult to see; look for eggs by shining a strong light on the hair near the scalp, or using the 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 from 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 a 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, dental floss, or a safety pin to remove the head lice or eggs.
- The conditioner and combing technique are also an effective head lice treatment. Keep combing the whole head until all the conditioner is gone. Repeat the process daily until no lice or eggs have been found for 10 days.
- Chemical treatments are also available for head lice—your pharmacist can help you choose a product

### Chemical treatments

There are four main categories of head lice products available in Australia which may include an active compound which kills head lice and some eggs (nits). Any head lice treatment product used should carry an Australian Registered (AUST R) number on the outer packaging indicating the product is accepted by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for supply in Australia. No treatment kills all eggs so the hair must be retreated after 7 to 10 days to kill any head lice that may have hatched or survived the first treatment.

There are many different chemical products available to use for children aged over six months- check with a pharmacist to help choose a product. No single chemical treatment will work for everyone, and lice can develop resistance to the chemicals.

### JURISDICTION SPECIFICATIONS FOR EACH STATE

<b>Western Australia (WA)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Health WA</li> <li>• <a href="http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Head-lice">http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Head-lice</a></li> </ul>

### SOURCE

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Children’s Education &amp; Care Quality Authority. (2014).</li> <li>• Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).</li> <li>• Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).</li> <li>• Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2017).</li> <li>• Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).</li> </ul>
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### REVIEW

<b>Policy Review Date</b>
September 2022