



# HEAD LICE POLICY

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Authorised by: **Principal**

Approved by School Council:  
**July 25<sup>th</sup> 2018**

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## Rationale:

Head lice (pediculosis) are tiny insects that live on the human scalp where they feed and breed. It is thought that between 2-3% of school children are infested at any one time. Head lice are considered by the Department of Health and Human Services to be a communicable disease and as such require eradication treatment.

## Aims:

To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.

To ensure that an effective process for treating head lice is well known and consistently followed.

To ensure that parents and guardians are well informed about head lice treatment.

To ensure that Horsham College minimise anxiety relating to headlice, by acknowledging to parents/guardians that most schools usually have some students with head lice at any given time.

## Implementation:

- The Principal will nominate head lice resource/support persons, who parents/guardians can contact at the school if required.
- It is the parents/guardians primary responsibility to detect and treat head lice. Horsham College do not conduct routine screenings for head lice or inspect individual students suspected of having head lice.
- In the event, that a student is suspected of having head lice:
  - The Horsham College Staff member that first becomes aware of the suspected head lice will direct the student to the Administration office. An administration staff member will contact parents/guardians and inform them that their child has a suspected case of head lice and is to be collected from school immediately to be checked for head lice (by parent/guardian, general practitioner, public health nurse or pharmacy staff). The Administration Staff member is to also inform the parents/guardians that if the child has a confirmed case of head lice, they are not to return to school until treatment to eradicate the live lice has commenced. Students may be treated one evening and return to school the next day and that the presence of eggs in the hair is not cause for exclusion. Parents/guardians will be made aware that one treatment is not sufficient to manage the problem and if a student re-attends school with live head lice the school may again exclude the student until the live insects have been removed.
  - The Administration Officer is to provide a letter of notification to parents/guardians of those students found to or are suspected of having head lice to the child before they are collected by parents/guardians. The letter will ask parents to inspect their child's hair and treat if necessary (Appendix 1).
  - The Administration Officer will ask the Wellbeing staff to distribute up-to-date information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents/guardians of all the students in the same class as the child suspected to be infested with head lice (available from website <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/>) . This information will provide advice about the use of safe treatment practices, which do not place students' health at risk. Providing information to all school students will also reduce stigma and maintain confidentiality of the suspected individual.

## Evaluation:

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

# HEAD LICE TREATMENT REPLY SLIP

***We suspect that your child's head may be infested with head lice. As per the Department of Education and Training Head Lice Policy and Guidelines, please assess your child and if required, have them treated prior to returning to school. Treatments can be obtained from any Pharmacy.***

***Upon return to school, please complete this form and hand to your child's Year Level Coordinator.***

- ☐ I assessed my child for head lice and there were none present.
- ☐ I have treated my child's head in a manner that has eradicated and removed the live lice. Treatment that I used: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent/Guardian*

# Treating and controlling headlice

## health

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.



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## Testing resistance

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.

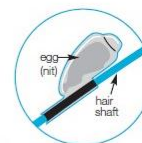
Any head lice product could cause a reaction and should be used with care by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, children less than 12 months old and people with allergies, asthma or open wounds on the scalp. If you are unsure, please check with your pharmacist or doctor.

## Head lice combs

Combs with long, rounded stainless steel teeth positioned very close together have been shown to be the most effective, however, any head lice comb can be used.

## Head lice eggs

Head lice eggs are small (the size of a pinhead) and oval. A live egg will 'pop' when squashed between fingernails.



Dead eggs have crumpled sides and hatched eggs look like tiny boiled eggs with their tops cut off.

## Regulations

According to the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, children with head lice can be readmitted to school or children's service centres after treatment has commenced.

The department recommends a child with head lice can be treated one evening and return to school or children's service centres the next day, even if there are still some eggs present. There is no need to miss school or child care because of head lice.

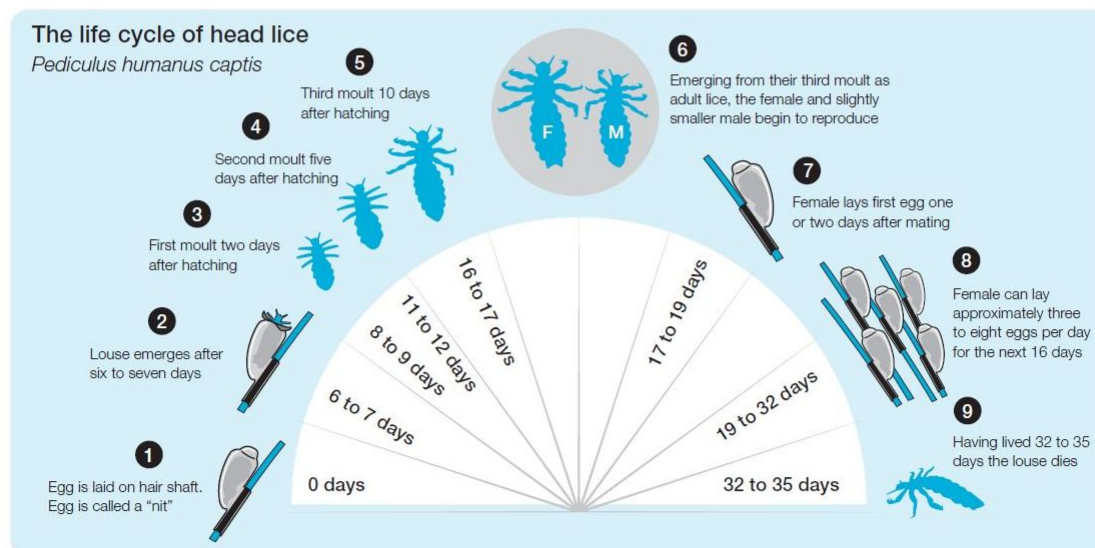
## Preventing head lice

Check your child's head regularly with comb and conditioner. There is no research to prove that chemical or herbal therapies can prevent head lice.

## Further information

The following website offers further information:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice)



The information in this pamphlet is based on the research conducted and written by Associate Professor Rick Speare and the team of researchers at, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, James Cook University.

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