



Head Lice Policy

National Quality Standards	2.1 Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
	2.1.1 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.
	2.1.2 Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
QA 2	2.2 Safety	Each child is protected.
	2.1.1 Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.

National Regulations	77	Health, hygiene, and safe food practices.
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures.

Policy Statement

Head lice continues to cause concern and frustration for families, educators, and children. Although head lice are not considered a health hazard, and do not spread disease, infestations can cause anxiety for all stakeholders. Head lice affect all socioeconomic groups and are not a sign of poor hygiene. They have no preference for ethnic background, hair colour, hair type, or age. This policy is intended to outline the roles, responsibilities, and expectation of the centre to assist with early identification, treatment, and control of head lice in a consistent and coordinated manner.

In the case that a child has head lice, the child will be excluded from preschool until appropriate treatment of eggs and lice has commenced. The child is welcome to return to preschool after they have been treated.

Procedure:

- Once nits or eggs have been detected, to minimise infection, it is necessary for the child concerned to be discreetly separated from the rest of the group.
- Parents will be contacted and informed.
- Parents should treat their child's hair using appropriate head lice preparation (based on medical advice), or conditioner and a nit comb.
- Parents should ensure that all eggs, dead and alive are removed between the initial and follow up treatments.
- Children are allowed to return to preschool once treatment has commenced.
- Parents of the remaining children in the preschool class will be notified of head lice being present, keeping details of child who is inflicted strictly confidential.

What are the signs:

The first signs that your child may have head lice is a tickling feeling in their hair, frequent scalp itchininess or sores/scabs on the scalp from scratching. It is important to be aware that the itching may not be immediate, and, in some cases, it can take weeks before your child starts to complain.

Although very small, a single adult louse can be seen and is about the size of a sesame seed. They usually look like tan or brown dots.

Unless the infestation is heavy, it is more likely that you will see nits in your child's hair, rather than lice crawling around. A good method of checking your child's head is by parting the hair in small sections and checking for lice

and nits with a fine-tooth comb close to the scalp, behind the ears, and around the nape of the neck. Good lighting and a magnifying glass may help this process. If you are still unsure, and your child is constantly itching and complaining, speak to your health care provider or pharmacist.

Recommendations:

- Chemical Treatment: Treat and comb to remove the head lice and eggs. Repeat this again in seven days.
- Non-Chemical Treatment: Use conditioner and comb to remove the head lice and eggs, repeat every two days until no live lice have been found for ten days. Using the conditioner and comb method every week is the best way to detect head lice early and minimise the problem. Tying back hair can also help prevent the spread of head lice.

Useful Information:

Q. Do head lice fly or jump? **A.** Head lice do not have wings so they cannot fly. They can't jump because they do not have knees.

Q. How do head lice move around? **A.** Head lice crawl very fast and require head-to-head contact for transmission. It is possible that because of the way young children play together, head lice are seen more widely amongst small children.

Q. Do head lice live in carpets, clothes, hats, or sheets? **A.** No. Head lice very rarely fall from the head. They require blood to survive. Head lice feed 3-4 times a day and without blood, will dehydrate in six hours in a dry climate and 24 hours in a humid climate.

Q. How does the conditioner and comb method work? **A.** It is a very cheap and effective way of finding head lice. Hair conditioner does not kill lice, but it does stun them for about 20 minutes, meaning they do not move around, and it is difficult for them to hang on. This gives you time to comb through the hair with a lice comb.

Q. How does chemical treatment work? **A.** Only use products that are licensed or registered for head lice. There are four different active chemicals that target head lice, each works differently and aim to kill lice and/or eggs.

Q. Should I treat everyone in the family? **A.** It is important to check each family member, but only treat those with live lice.

Q. What should I wash or treat at home? **A.** As head lice only live for a short time off the head, the only extra cleaning needed is to wash the pillowslip on the hot cycle or place in a clothes dryer. Head lice combs can be cleaned in water hotter than 60 degrees.

Q. Why does my child keep getting reinfected? **A.** Reinfection is the least likely reason for head lice returning in a week's time. If eggs do not die, or were not removed during the original treatment they may hatch and the lifecycle occurs all over again. To break this lifecycle you must retreat (regardless of treatment method) seven days after the first treatment and continue with weekly checking.

Source:

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
Better Health Channel. (2019). Head lice (nits) [Fact Sheet]. <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health>
Children's Health Queensland, Head Lice Fact Sheet, <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au>
Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).
Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services. Privacy Act 1988.
Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
SA Health. (2019). Head lice, management guidelines for schools.
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Review:

Governing Council and staff will monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy and revise the policy when required (at least once every three years).

This Policy has been approved and ratified by Governing Council. Date of next review: November 2026


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Kelly Versteeg - Chairperson

6 November 2023


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Lynette Francis - Director

6 November 2023

Policy reviewed: 6 November 2023	Next review date: 6 November 2026
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