

Tocumwal Pre-School

SECTION: 2 – Children’s Health and Safety

POLICY NO: 2.6.3

POLICY: Head lice

REVIEW DATE: 13/9/2016

DATE OF APPROVAL:

Introduction

The head louse, or *Pediculus humanus capitis*, is a parasitic insect that can be found on the head, eyebrows, and eyelashes of people. Head lice are insects that live in hair and suck blood from the scalp. They are a nuisance because they can cause itching of the scalp, but they do not cause disease or illness. 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 begins again. The lice in a person’s hair can be at various stages of their life cycle, so new eggs can be laid and new lice can hatch continuously. Head lice can only be spread from one person to another by direct head-to-head contact—the lice cannot jump or fly. Head lice do not live or breed on animals, bedding, furniture, carpets, clothes or soft toys. They cannot spread by sharing hats.

Goals – What are we going to do?

As long as the eggs or lice are alive, they can spread to other people by direct head-to-head contact. Children will be sent home as soon as possible from the Centre if head lice are detected to break the cycle of infestation. The child may return to the education and care service as soon as ‘effective treatment’ has started. An effective treatment is when a treatment is used and all the lice are dead.

National Quality Framework, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety

National Quality Framework Standard 2.1 Each child’s health is promoted

- 2.1.1 Each child’s health needs are supported
- 2.1.4 Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognized guidelines

Strategies - How will it be done?

Educators will:

- Keep families informed if there is someone in the education and care service with head lice.
- If one child in a class has head lice, it is likely that several others also have them. Do not isolate a child who is known to have lice—it does not make sense and can be humiliating for the child.
- Educate staff, children and parents about head lice.
- Recommend that staff and children tie back long hair to reduce the chance of spread
- Where possible, reduce head-to-head contact between children when the education and care service is aware that someone has head lice.
- Support parents and children who have head lice by providing factual information, reducing parental anxiety and not singling out individual children with head lice.

Families will:

- 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.
- You may send your child back to the education and care service as soon as effective treatment has started.
- Check for head lice in other family members as well.

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 is 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.

Statutory Legislation & Considerations

- National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care , Council of Australian Governments December 2011
- Education and Care Services National Amended Regulations 2014

Sources

- Community Child Care Co-operative Ltd. (NSW)
- NSW Department of Health –
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/headlice>
- National Health and Medical Research Council - www.nhmrc.gov.au
- Staying Healthy—Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services NHMRC, 5th Edition 2012
www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/