

# Annandale State Primary School Headlice Policy

Revised October 2013



Dear Parent

We are a 'Health Promoting School' which means we value the physical and emotional health of everyone in our school community. When we deal with a particular issue (such as head lice), we consider:

- the need for accurate information and support to decrease any myths or blame;
- the importance of feeling good about ourselves and others;
- the need for everyone to work together.

Parents have the prime responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice on their children. Schools are not authorised to physically check for headlice unless parental consent is provided.

Please refer to the information in this booklet as needed and contact the school administration if you have any further questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely

*Jan Cooper*

Principal

## **Detection (finding the head lice)**

**Itching is often the first thing that raises concern about head lice, however it is not a reliable sign of head lice. Why check for head lice?**

You can have head lice and not know. Lice move fast in dry hair and are easy to miss. Itching is not a reliable sign. Most children who itch do not have head lice. If you find head lice early, they are easier to treat.

### **Who should be checked for head lice?**

Everyone in the family - adults and children.

### **When to check for head lice?**

Check everyone once a week. If a close contact has head lice, keep checking every 2 days until no lice are found for 10 consecutive days.

### **How to check for head lice?**

Using hair conditioner and combing is the most effective way of finding head lice. Conditioner and combing can be used for detection and/or treatment. (For more information see Conditioner and combing: a technique for detection and/or treatment of head lice).

### **What exactly am I looking for? Adult and young head lice.**

#### **About the eggs ...**

Eggs will be glued to the hair. Those found within 1.5cm from the scalp mean an active condition. They will hatch and will need to be treated. If you find only eggs more than 1.5cm from the scalp and no adult or young lice, the condition is inactive and does not require treatment.

#### **About head lice combs ...**

Head lice combs are very fine toothed, made from plastic or metal and are designed to remove head lice. Some combs also remove some eggs. There are different types available: lastic, metal and electronic. Metal head lice combs with cylindrical teeth remove head lice and eggs better than combs with flat teeth.

### **Tips:**

Checking for head lice is easier to remember if you do it on the same day each week. Use the head lice record in this package to help you track the detection and treatment of head lice. If you need more copies of the record, contact the school.

# Treatment

## It is recommended that you use:

- The conditioner and combing technique as a treatment alone or
- The conditioner and combing technique in between the use of a chemical treatment.

It is essential to check for effectiveness after each application of a chemical product. Some head lice are resistant to some chemical treatments. This means that this treatment will not be effective in killing head lice.

## Conditioner and combing : a technique for the detection and/or treatment of head lice

- Conditioner and combing is the most effective way of finding head lice.
- Conditioner and combing is also an effective way of treating head lice, particularly mild conditions.
- The conditioner stuns the lice for some minutes so they can be easily removed.
- Conditioner and combing is cheap. It also avoids the use of head lice chemicals (insecticides).
- Conditioner and combing is easy for older children to learn to do for themselves.
- Using conditioner and combing every two days between chemical treatments removes young lice as they hatch from the eggs. No insecticide will kill the eggs.

### Conditioner and combing you will need:

- white hair conditioner
- an ordinary comb
- a fine tooth comb
- hair clips
- white tissues or material
- good light
- a magnifying glass
- a mirror if combing yourself
- a plastic container
- an old toothbrush, safety pin or dental floss

## Choosing a chemical treatment product

- Choose only chemical treatments designed specifically to treat head lice. Choose only chemical treatments which have an 'Aust. L' or 'Aust R' number on the label.
- These products are licensed or registered with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia. This means they are approved for safety.
- Be wary of chemical treatments which are not officially approved.

### Four group concept

Chemical treatments are grouped according to the active ingredient (which is responsible for killing the head lice). If you use a chemical treatment and it does not kill the head lice, choose a product with a different active ingredient; that is, one from a different group (see table at right). Products from the same group will probably not work as the active ingredient will be the same. The Table of Products lists some chemical treatments currently available. New treatments continue to come on to the market. Your pharmacist can help you choose a product.

### Using chemical treatments

- Chemical treatments are insecticides (poisons) and need to be used with caution.
- Check for safety warnings about pregnancy, breast feeding and young children. If you have any questions about safety, check with your pharmacist.
- Use a chemical treatment only when you actually find head lice. This avoids unnecessary exposure to chemicals. Use the conditioner and combing technique to find lice.
- Chemical treatments do not repel head lice. They should not be used to prevent head lice.

Chemical treatments are only safe when they are used as directed on the label. Overuse can damage the scalp. Many chemicals can be absorbed through the skin. Any chemical treatment may cause allergy or irritation. Discuss any concerns about side effects with your pharmacist.

A chemical treatment is effective when it actually kills the head lice. To work properly, the chemical treatment must be in contact with the head lice at the right concentration and for the right amount of time. Make sure you follow the instructions carefully. No one chemical treatment will work for everyone. It is essential to check for effectiveness every time you use a chemical treatment.

No chemical treatment will kill eggs. The eggs will continue to hatch after the treatment. Therefore it is essential to apply the second treatment one week later to kill any young lice that have hatched. The conditioner and combing technique can be used in between to help remove lice that are hatching.

Resistance to chemical treatments is a problem in Australia. Research into this problem is continuing. The only way of dealing with resistance is to check for effectiveness every time you use a chemical treatment (for more information see Treatment).

If chemical products don't work or you have concerns about their use, conditioner and combing can be an effective treatment if used every 2 days until no head lice are found for 10 consecutive days.

# What about the house and personal belongings?

Head lice need to spend their entire life on human heads to survive. They feed on the scalp by sucking blood and lay their eggs on the hair close to the scalp. Head lice will die from dehydration within 6 to 24 hours when removed from the human head, depending on humidity and when they last fed. Recent scientific research in Queensland has clarified the following concerns:

## Hats

Sharing hats presents no risk. It does not increase the chance of getting head lice. Researchers examined the hats worn by 1000 school children and found no head lice even when many head lice were found on the children's heads.

## Combs and grooming implements

Place hair grooming implements in a container of very hot water (just after boiling) for at least 30 seconds. This will kill any head lice caught in the comb after grooming. It should be done by an adult. Be aware hot water burns like fire; be sure your child cannot reach their comb while it is in the container of hot water.

## Floors

Researchers examined 118 carpeted classroom floors and found no head lice or eggs. When the students from those classrooms were examined, they had a total of 14 563 live head lice on their heads.

## Bed linen

The pillow cases of people with head lice are a very low risk in spreading head lice. Any head lice found on pillow cases will die within 6 to 24 hours. Although pillow cases are a very low risk, you may want to use a hot wash or soak in hot water (just after boiling) for at least 30 seconds or place in a hot clothes dryer for 15 minutes. There is no evidence to indicate that other household items are a risk of spreading head lice.

