Hendra State School - Head Lice (Pediculosis) Policy (2011)

Relevant legislation and policy

Legislation and/or regulations

Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006 (Qld) Part 2 s. 5

Related procedures

HLS-PR-004: Infection Control and Management of Prescribed Contagious Conditions

Statement of Intent

Introduction

Hendra State School recognises that the occurrence of head lice is the most common insect infestation in humans throughout the world. Hendra State School acknowledges that although head lice infestation may affect people of any age, nationality, gender or socio-economic status, in Queensland, infestation occurs mainly in children of primary school age. It is seen as much a social issue as a health or educational issue, and the way that it is approached can have significant influence on a student's emotional, social and educational development.

Parents have the prime responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice on their children.

Hendra State School acknowledges that the main route of transmission for head lice is head-to-head contact and promotes general measures that help in the prevention of infestations.

Students suspected of having live head lice or eggs present in their hair are not removed from class or school. Such students are provided with information to take home to their families and a letter requesting immediate treatment be commenced.

At Hendra State School a ‘Managing Head Lice at Home’ package is sent home to all families at the beginning of each school year.

At Hendra State School we discourage the following strategies as they have been shown to be either unnecessary or ineffective –

- shaving the head or cutting the hair a short length
- treatment of inanimate objects such as clothes, furniture, carpets or car interiors
- over-use of chemical treatment options by families, and
- treatment of every member of the household unless every person has evident lice.

Staff at Hendra State School will undertake treatment only under exceptional circumstances when the principal has determined it necessary for a student's well-being and educational development. Treatment undertaken at school must have parental approval (written or verbal) and be a Queensland Health recommended treatment.

Care is taken with regard to the provision of school hats during periods of infestation, being mindful of the fact that head lice can only live a short time away from the human head (up to one or two days).
Responsibilities

**Principal:**
- facilitate a whole-of-school approach to the management of head lice based on Queensland Health's Resources for Schools including the Head Lice in Primary Schools Kit
- communicate with the school community that the main route of transmission for head lice is head-to-head contact and promote general measures, proven internationally, as helpful in the prevention of infestations including:
  - discouraging the sharing of brushes and combs
  - keeping long hair tidy
  - providing information to families about the biology and control of head lice, and
  - encouraging regular examinations of children's hair by family members.
- ensure policies are developed whereby the school community may assist with the detection and treatment of head lice infestation amongst students in a number of ways, including:
  - undertaking agreed, whole-school or whole-class proactive or reactive strategies as per Queensland Health guidelines. **When the presence of head lice at school is suspected, volunteers authorised by the principal may physically check for head lice only under the following conditions:**
    - if the parent provides written or verbal consent
    - if the child agrees
    - if infection control guidelines are observed, and
    - if student confidentiality is assured.
  - ensure school staff, or other willing adults (authorised by the principal through school based decision making/management processes) visually checking **(no physical contact)** students for head lice do so in a discreet and sensitive manner
- promote the Conditioner and Comb method of treatment in regular school newsletter items
- incorporate Head Lice awareness into the school Health and Physical Education Syllabus (Refer to Lousing About) where appropriate
- provide current information on recommended treatment available from Queensland Health, the local pharmacy or doctor to parents as the providers of treatment.
- maintain student confidentiality
- distribute school procedures and information on the control, detection and treatment of head lice to parents and staff at the beginning of the school year or more frequently if required
- alert families by letter (headlice alert) that head lice have been found at school. This letter includes an ‘Action taken at home’ tear-off slip which the parents should return to the school. If the tear-off slip is not returned, a reminder letter should be sent.
- inform parents/caregivers of the school's reasonable expectation that:
  - parents will regularly inspect their child's head to detect the presence of lice or lice eggs, and
  - when infestation is suspected, all household members are inspected and treated if required.
- ensure, if a whole-school head lice detection and treatment activity is planned for the school or a section of the school, that appropriate written or verbal consent is obtained from parents and students beforehand
- advise parents to be vigilant, particularly during periods of heavy lice infestation
- implement classroom organisation and teaching programs, as well as guidelines for play, that minimise head-to-head contact during outbreaks of head lice, and
- support parents through practical advice and an empathic attitude to avoid stigmatising families who have difficulty complying with control measures.

**Parents:**
- regularly inspect their child's head to detect the presence of lice or lice eggs
- immediately treat their child on discovery of lice or lice eggs, and
- notify the school if their child is affected, and advise when treatment has begun