



Parent-Managed Head Lice Program

Head lice infection can be a sensitive issue for parents and children and can be difficult to manage. The responsibility of treating and detecting head lice rests primarily with parents.

St Dominic's school will always be sensitive about head lice and should maintain student confidentiality if a case of head lice is detected. The school will also work with parents to develop head lice policies and can offer support and advice on preventing and minimising the impact of head lice outbreaks.

There is no way to prevent head lice so it's important for parents to check their child's hair regularly even when they don't think they have head lice.

Using conditioner is a cheap and effective way to help find head lice in a child's hair. Conditioner doesn't kill head lice, but it stuns them for about 20 minutes, so they cannot move around or hang onto the hair. This method gives parents time to comb through the hair with a lice comb and determine if head lice is present and begin a treatment method as soon as possible if they are detected.

The Department of Health website includes information for parents about head lice, including a fact sheet about treating and controlling infections and a list of frequently asked questions. See: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/head-lice>

This school policy draws on information obtained from the Information Pamphlet and Management Guidelines 'Scratching for Answers?'.¹

Procedures:

It is the expectation of parents/carers and families attending this school that:

- Children's hair will be checked for head lice on a weekly basis, at home, using the recommended conditioner/combing detection method;
- The School Exclusion Table, regulated by the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 indicates that Your child can return to school once head lice has been treated and the school has been notified.
- Parents/Carers regularly inspect all household members and then treat them if necessary;
- Parents/Carers will notify the school if their child is found to have live lice and advise when appropriate treatment was commenced.

¹ <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/factsheets/Treating%20and%20controlling%20headlice>

- Children with long hair will attend school with hair tied back;
- Parents/Carers use only safe and recommended practices to treat head lice;
- Parents/Carers maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;
- Parents/Carers act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community especially around issues of head lice;

To support parents/carers and the broader school community to achieve a consistent, collaborative approach to head lice management the school will undertake to:

- Distribute up to date and accurate information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents and staff at the beginning of the year or more frequently if required;
- Include information about head lice management in orientation and transition programs for new families/staff attending the school;
- Include information and updates in school newsletters;
- Include annual head lice updates for staff in-service programs;
- Provide practical advice and maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures;
- Access community educational resources and support, such as primary school nurses, community health centres and local government;
- Abide by the recommendations of The School Exclusion Table, regulated by the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009 in that the responsibility to exclude a child from the school rests with the principal or person in charge, and only exclude children from school with live insects if deemed appropriate and after discussion with parents/carers;
- Accept the advice of parents that appropriate treatment has commenced;
- Encourage children to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or 'bullying' associated with the issue;
- Be aware of real difficulties some parents may encounter and seek extra support if required;
- Review the head lice policy as part of our School Improvement Plan;
- Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community especially around issues of Head Lice;
- Continue to seek opportunities to increase our collective understanding of and response to managing head lice.
- There is no requirement for any school to undertake 'head-lice inspection' programs.

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the School Improvement Plan review cycle.

Appendices:

1. Parent Letter 'They're Back'

2. Head Lice 'Scratching for Answers'

3. Treating and Controlling headlice