

GUIDELINES

HEAD LICE MANAGEMENT

Responsibility of: School Support Services
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Target Audience: All Staff, Parents and School Communities

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1. INTRODUCTION

The appropriate management of head lice is an important aspect of student wellbeing. These guidelines are intended to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach in the management and control of head lice throughout Northern Territory government schools. These guidelines align with the advice of the Department of Health.

Although head lice rarely pose a major threat to health, common symptoms of itching and irritation can cause sleep disturbance and behavioural problems. Head lice do not jump, hop or swim. They transfer from one person to another in situations where people are in close contact or from direct hair to hair contact with an infected person. Very occasionally they can be passed on by sharing hats and brushes but not through using furniture or contact with carpets.

To prevent the outbreak of head lice in a school, parents are required to treat their children if head lice or nits are suspected, prior to the next day of school. Effective treatments and prevention strategies are outlined in the [Department of Health Head Lice and Nits fact sheet](#).

These guidelines apply to all Northern Territory government schools and preschools.

2. DEFINITIONS

Parent signifies a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition.

Head lice are tiny insects (2 – 3mm long) which live in the hair feeding on human blood and vary in colour from cream to brown/black.

Nits is the common name for the small eggs that are laid by head lice. They are the size of a grain of salt, yellow-white in colour, and are found glued to the hair near the scalp. Dead nits are often black in colour and are found well away from the scalp.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principals/teachers should:

- inform parents if their child is suspected of having head lice
- inform parents of the class where head lice have been found

DoE Guidelines: Head lice management

- encourage parents to check their children for head lice regularly through the school newsletter and other appropriate channels
- minimise head to head contact during outbreaks
- develop an action plan with those parents who have difficulties in providing treatment.

Parents must:

- regularly inspect children's hair and begin treatment immediately if head lice are present
- notify the school if head lice/nits are found and advise when treatment has began.

4. GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES

Where a student is suspected of having head lice or live nits, the student is to remain at school until the end of the school day. The student must not be excluded if evidence is provided that effective treatment has begun before the next day of school. This is in alignment with [Centre of Disease Control 'Time Out' poster](#).

Head lice/nits are suspected on a child by school staff.



The student suspected of having head lice is to **remain at school** until the end of the school day. The parent of the student suspected of having head lice/nits must be notified verbally where possible and the student must take home a note informing the parent of suspected head lice/nits and requesting them to check/treat their child, refer to **Attachment A**.

Notification should be done discreetly.

School must verbally advise and send out a letter with the class regarding the current outbreak and requesting parents check their child for head lice, refer **Attachment B**.



Parents are asked to follow the treatment protocol from the [NT Head Lice Action pack](#) and advise the school that treatment has commenced. Schools could make use of the [posters](#) and [booklets](#) provided by the Department of Health.



If a head lice problem persists, a whole school approach can be an effective strategy of minimising head lice outbreaks, with the support of school council, parents and the community.