



Head Lice Policy

Purpose: To outline facts, recommended treatments, and the attendance policy for children who have active cases of head lice or recently active cases of head lice.

Head lice may cause concern and frustration for some parents, educators, and children. This policy is intended to outline roles, responsibilities, and policies to assist with treatment and control of head lice in a consistent and coordinated manner. Research shows there are varying policies regarding head lice in public and private schools and child care centers throughout North America, including Costa Rica. This specific policy is drafted based on both current research about head lice transmission and our unique and intimate learning centre dynamic.

While parents and caregivers have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, our centre will work in a cooperative manner to assist families with accurate identification and effective management. Because lice are much more likely to be transmitted in smaller, more intimate settings such as homeschools, it is incredibly important that all families make an honest commitment to follow procedures outlined.

Facts About Head Lice

Head lice are small, wingless insects that only survive on humans. If isolated from the head, lice die very quickly, usually within 24 hours. They can only crawl; they cannot jump and they cannot fly, and they rarely leave the head of their host.

People almost always get lice from direct hair to hair contact with another person who has lice, or sometimes from sharing a personal item such as a hair brush or hat. Children do not catch lice from a school or a child care center; they catch it from direct contact with other children when they gather and interact at a school. While

they are extremely uncomfortable, difficult to control, inconvenient, and often costly to manage, head lice are not a threat to health.

Life Cycle of a Louse

The life cycle of the head louse has three stages: egg/nit (liendres), nymph (nimfas), and adult (piojos adultos). Eggs: Nits are head lice eggs. They are hard to see and are often confused for dandruff. They are found near the scalp and are yellowish or white. They take about one week to hatch. Nymphs: The egg hatches to release a nymph which remains at the hair shaft and looks like an adult louse, but is about the size of a pinhead. Nymphs become adults about 7 days after hatching. Adults: The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has 6 legs (each with claws), and is tan to grayish-white. The female louse will lay about 8 eggs/nits per day if untreated.

Adult lice can live up to 30 days on a person's head. To live, adult lice need to feed on blood several times daily.

Without blood, the louse will die within 1-2 days off the host.

Expectations of parents of children attending Life Project Education:

1. Students' hair will be checked regularly and thoroughly at home.
2. Children will be kept home if parents identify ANY evidence of active/living head lice, including nits/eggs, nymphs, and/or adult lice. As with any other contagious illness or condition that requires a child to remain at home, tuition will not be refunded or discounted during the child's absence.
3. Parents will notify Life Project Education team members immediately if nits, nymphs, and/or adult lice are identified.

4. Parents will regularly inspect household items, siblings, housemates, and themselves for evidence of lice, and provide treatments to ensure enrolled children remains free of lice.

5. Parents will send children to Life Project Education with ALL hair securely tied back daily, regardless of recent head lice exposure. Tight braids and buns are the best.

6. Children with recent cases of treated head lice must wear hair completely covered until follow up treatments and removal of dead nits and nymphs are complete. It is recommended that all children wear their hair completely covered if a recent case is identified.

7. All parents will agree to be honest and proactive in order to collaboratively maintain a lice-free environment.

8. Parents and children will act responsibly and sensitively, avoiding stigmatizing or blame towards families who are experiencing difficulties with control measures. Questions and concerns regarding head lice will be directed privately to the director, Alys Robinson.

Recommended Head Lice Treatments

There are varying opinions regarding how to best treat head lice. Homeschool staff will not make certain treatments required, nor share personal opinions regarding how to treat head lice. Treatment is a personal choice and a parent's choice of treatment need not be shared with staff nor other families. Support and suggestions will be made upon family request. The only concern of staff is the outcome or result of the family's treatment. However, research shows that some at-home treatments may not be effective, or may take much longer to fully contain and eliminate head lice. Families that wish to use more natural treatments must understand that the process will likely require children to be home and out of our

learning environment longer. All families will be treated equally regarding attendance. Regardless of treatment choice, if the child attends LPE with live eggs, nymphs, and/or adult lice, they will be required to remain at home until the preferred treatment proves effective.

While not typically used as treatments, there are many non-toxic substances that are recommended to prevent or discourage lice. These include: Coconut oil, Tea Tree oil, Rosemary oil, Lavender oil, Hairspray. and UNSCENTED shampoos (unless coconut or tea tree).

Children are required to attend school with their hair fully pulled back, preferably in a bun or braid. It is also recommended hair be sprayed with coconut oil infused with one of the recommended essential oils, and further secured with hairspray.

This may seem extreme, inconvenient, or perhaps unattractive, however, many people have reported success with preventative measures. Many people believe head lice do not prefer these scents, and do not like the stickiness of hairspray. Students should never wear scented hair products. Students are also encouraged to bring a personal spray bottle of coconut oil with added drops of the recommended preventative essential oils. Staff will apply spray during the school day if parents choose to send a personal bottle.

Pura Vida!

