



Head Lice Refresher for Elementary Parents

Myths	Truths
Myth - Head lice are easy to get.	Lice are spread by direct head-to-head contact. They are much harder to get than a cold, the flu, pink eye, or strep throat. With that said, approximately 1 in 100 children will have head lice each year.
Myth - Lice are often passed through hats and helmets.	Rare, but possible. Sharing hair brushes, towels, and bedding are more likely to spread head lice.
Myth - School is a common place for transmission.	School is a VERY RARE source of transmission. Much more common is family members, overnight guests, and playmates that spend large amounts of time together.
Myth - Head Lice are a serious disease.	Lice do not spread any known disease. They are annoying and anxiety producing but cause no disease.
Myth - Lice can fly or jump from one person to another.	Lice only crawl! Further, they prefer to stay on the head currently providing a free lunch.
Myth - Any nits (eggs) left on the hair can lead to a re-infestation of head lice.	Nits further away than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the scalp have likely hatched and pose no additional threat.
Myth - Nits can fall out of the hair, hatch and cause spread to other individuals.	Nits are cemented to the hair and very difficult to remove. Also, newly hatched larvae must find a meal immediately or they perish.
Myth - Lice can live a long time off the head.	Lice live, at the most, 24 to 48 hours off the head. Families with lice should focus most on proper treatment of the head. Only recently worn clothing, towels and bedding needs laundered. Insecticide sprays are NOT recommended and can be dangerous. Vacuuming most frequently used floors and furniture may be helpful.
Myth - Checking a classroom when one student has head lice can prevent lice from spreading.	Classroom transmission is EXTREMELY RARE. Checking every student's head is a waste of valuable teaching time and would likely not find an early case. Checking family members and playmates is much more appropriate.
Myth - Once present, it is very difficult to get rid of Lice.	There are new prescription products that have proven to be both safe and very effective for eliminating lice. The school nurse can help you use your time and money wisely in regard to Head Lice.

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Myth - People with poor hygiene and lower income are at higher risk for getting head lice.	Anyone can get head lice, they just need a human host.
Myth - A person can get head lice from pets.	Animals do not carry human head lice. You can only get them from another person.
Myth - Boys do not get head lice.	Some research indicates that more girls get head lice than boys, but longer hair may be the contributing factor. It is NOT recommended to cut hair simply because of head lice.
Myth - There are products available that can be used to prevent head lice.	There is NO current scientific research supporting products to prevent lice. Avoiding head to head contact and keeping long hair pulled back or in a ponytail may be beneficial.
Myth - I have heard that over-the-counter head lice products no longer work.	Research finding resistance has only been conducted in a few places in our country. The current recommendation is to begin treatment with over-the-counter products. • Treatment failure of over-the-counter products may be related to not following all of the directions such as ○ The product may advise not to use shampoo or conditioners for a period of time. ○ The product might require a second treatment a few days later. • All family members and close contacts, including blended family members, need to be checked and, if lice are present, treated at the same time. • People often mistake other things (like dandruff) for nits. • Prescription products are available if needed.

Things **parents** can do to assist with prevention of spread of Head Lice:

- Frequently monitor the heads of young children for signs of head lice (nits present at the nape of the neck or above the ears), especially if children are displaying symptoms of itchy scalp.
- Report cases of head lice to the school nurse. The school nurse is happy to assist and provide information about new effective products for elimination of head lice.
- Inform parents of your child's playmates if they have been exposed to head lice.
- Above all, remain calm and remember head lice do not spread any known disease.
- Helpful websites include:
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>
 - <https://identify.us.com/>
 - http://www.kdheks.gov/c-f/head_lice.htm