

Head Lice Myths and Facts



Definitions	
Infestation = having multiple insects present and reproducing, in this case, on a human head	
Lice = more than one louse	
Louse = small insect that lives on the scalp (singular)	
Nits = eggs, dead or alive, of a louse	
Parasite = an organism that lives off another, i.e. lice surviving on the blood of humans	
Pediculosis = having an infestation of lice	
Myth	Fact
<i>It is easy to get lice.</i>	Lice are spread by head-to-head contact and are much harder to get than a cold, the flu, ear infections, pink eye, strep throat or impetigo.
<i>Avoiding lice is important, as they are dirty and spread disease.</i>	Lice do not spread any known disease, nor are they impacted by hygiene.
<i>Head lice are very sturdy creatures and can survive many days off a human head in furniture, linens, or clothing.</i>	Head lice need a blood meal every few hours in addition to the warmth and humidity of the human scalp to survive. When off the human body, in optimal conditions, they cannot survive for more than 24 to 36 hours.
<i>Nits (lice eggs) can fall off a person's head, hatch, and cause another person to get lice.</i>	Nits are glued to the hair shaft by a cement-like substance and are very hard to remove. When a nymph is hatched, it must quickly have the warmth and food source of a head to survive.
<i>Cutting a person's hair will prevent head lice infestations.</i>	The length of a person's hair does not prevent head lice infestations.
<i>You can get head lice from sitting at a desk next to someone who is infested with head lice.</i>	Head lice are spread through direct head-to-head contact. The lice do not hop, jump, or fly, so sitting near someone with head lice does not increase the risk of getting the lice.
<i>Lice are commonly spread throughout schools.</i>	Transmissions in schools are rare. It is more common to get head lice from family members, overnight guests, and playmates who spend a lot of time together.
<i>Lice are commonly spread through hats, helmets, or headphones.</i>	Although the spreading of lice through hats, helmets, or headphones is possible, it is rare . It is more common for transmission to occur from pillows, hairbrushes, or bedding. Transmission primarily occurs through head-to-head contact.

Myth	Fact
<i>Schools and child-care facilities should screen all children for head lice, so everyone can be treated and the spread of head lice will be prevented.</i>	Having regularly scheduled mass screenings does not reduce the incidence of head lice.
<i>“No-nit” policies reduce the risk of head lice in schools and child-care facilities.</i>	Research shows “no-nit” policies do not decrease the number of cases of head lice. They do increase the risk of incorrect diagnosis of head lice, the number of days children are out of school, and negative social stigma associated with head lice. They also may hinder academic performance.
<i>You can get lice from your dog or other pets.</i>	Head lice are specific to humans. You can get human lice only from other humans. You cannot give your pets lice.

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