

Head Lice Myths



Head lice are one of the most commonly misunderstood topics today. There are several myths about head lice, some of them may have a thread of truth to them, but most are simply widespread misunderstandings.

Head lice can jump from person to person: This is *untrue*; head lice cannot jump or fly. They can, however, crawl and spread through direct head-to-head contact, or indirectly by means of personal items such as hat, combs, brushes, shared pillows at sleepovers, etc.

Head lice live in the classroom carpet: Also *untrue*. Lice need a human host in order to survive. If a strand of hair with a nit attached happens to fall onto the carpet, the conditions needed for it to incubate & hatch would no longer be present. Without wings or the ability to jump, adult lice are unable to return to a head to feed and will quickly die.

It is absolutely necessary to use a pesticide in my house to rid it of head lice: Though you can choose to do this if you want, it really is not necessary. Head lice can only live for about 2 to 3 days when they are not on a human host. If there happens to be nits on carpet or furniture, when they hatch they will have to feed within a short period of time or they will die. Vacuum the carpet and furniture, but concentrate on bedding, clothes, combs, brushes and stuffed animals.

You can treat a head lice infestation with petroleum jelly: Though a petroleum jelly may smother lice, it will not kill the nits. In addition, it is very hard to remove it from the hair. The same is true for many other “home remedies” such as mayonnaise, olive oil, etc.

It is necessary to shave or cut the hair when treating for head lice: It is true that this will help to more easily treat for head lice, but it can be a traumatic experience, especially for children. The better option is to treat the condition by carefully removing all the nits with a specially designed nit removal comb.

Lice are impossible to get rid of: It may seem like an uphill battle, but with thorough combing (with a specialized nit removal comb) and diligent re-checking the chance of a re-infestation is minimal.

Someone keeps giving my child lice! Lice are spread through direct contact and by sharing items that have come into contact with lice. The reality is, if your child continues to have nits on his or her head it is most likely a re-infestation of the original lice. The only way to effectively treat and prevent a re-infestation is to identify & remove all nits.

Lice can transmit disease: Though head lice are an uncomfortable and embarrassing condition, it has few risks. The danger is in a rash or lacerations on the scalp due to scratching that may become infected.

Clean people do not get head lice: This is completely *untrue*. Anyone can catch head lice, no matter how clean they are. In fact, head lice prefer a clean, healthy scalp, but it matters little to these tiny insects whose head they infest.