

Lice Myths & Truths

MYTHS	TRUTHS
Head lice are easy to get.	Lice are spread mainly by head-to-head contact. They are much harder to get than a cold, flu, ear infection, pink eye, strep throat, food poisoning, or impetigo.
You can get lice from your pets.	Lice cannot be transmitted from pets, and pets cannot get them from people.
You can get head lice from hats or helmets.	Head lice are spread most commonly by direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Spread by contact with inanimate objects and personal belongings may occur but is very uncommon.
School is a common place for lice transmission.	School is an unlikely source of transmission. Much more common are family members, overnight guests, and playmates who spent a large amount of time together.
Poor hygiene contributes to lice.	Hygiene makes absolutely no difference. You get lice by close personal head-to-head contact with someone else that has lice, not by being dirty.
Lice can jump or fly from one person to another.	No! Head lice do not jump, fly or swim. Anywhere there is a group of people or head-to-head contact children are at risk for getting head lice.
Any nits left in the hair can cause lice to come back.	Any nits farther away than one quarter inch to one half inch on the hair shaft are ALREADY HATCHED and pose no risk to others.
Eggs or nits can fall out of the hair, hatch, and cause lice in another person.	Nits are cemented to the hair and very hard to remove. They cannot fall off. Newly hatched lice must find a head quickly or will die
Lice can live a long time.	Lice live only 1 to 2 days off the head. Each louse only lives about 30 days on the head.
Checking a classroom when one student has lice can prevent lice from spreading.	Classroom transmission is EXCEEDINGLY RARE and checking students is a waste of valuable teaching time. Checking family members and close playmates is much more appropriate.
Head lice can be caught by swimming.	When lice are in water, they go into a state of suspended animation but remain firmly locked onto the hair. This is how they survive shampooing, rain, seawater, and swimming pools. Risk of transmission will occur with the sharing of towels.
Avoiding lice is important as they spread disease.	Head lice do not spread any known disease. They are annoying and irritating, but not dangerous.