



Head Lice: Dismiss the Myths

Head lice are a nuisance, **YES**, but they are **NOT** a threat to our health. With preventive measures and correct treatment, the incidence of head lice may be reduced and transmission can be controlled.



Misinformation and fear about head lice creates social stigma, which isolates children from their peers and may damage self-esteem.

Myth: One student is responsible for the lice outbreak in school.

DISMISS IT!

- ◆ It is impossible to determine the source of an outbreak, or who transmitted head lice to whom. Check your child's head **often** to catch head lice early.
- ◆ Head lice are often brought into school from outside sources, such as summer camp, and then spread amongst students at school.

Myth: Students with head lice should be sent home from school.

DISMISS IT!

- ◆ The Canadian Paediatric Society and the American Academy of Paediatrics discourage exclusion policies. Treatment can wait until after school.
- ◆ The student is usually infected weeks before lice are detected; therefore risk of spread to other children has already been occurring.

Myth: Lice prefer dirty hair and will avoid heads coated in hair products.

DISMISS IT!

- ◆ Head lice do not prefer dirty hair. Anyone can get head lice, regardless of their hygiene practices.
- ◆ Application of gels, hairsprays, etc., does not protect children from head lice.

Myth: Head lice jump, fly, and swim from head to head.

DISMISS IT!

- ◆ Head lice are unmotivated to leave the scalp, because they depend on it for food, warmth, and shelter.
- ◆ Head lice only crawl, so head-to-head contact is necessary for spread to occur.

For more information contact your School Public Health Nurse.

References

Canadian Paediatric Society. (2004). Head lice infestations: A clinical update. *Paediatrics and Child Health*, 9(9), 647-651
 Frankowski, B. & Weiner, L. (2002). Head lice. *Paediatrics*, 110(3), 638-644
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