

Head lice are generally misunderstood. Below are facts and myths about lice.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Head lice do not fly (they have no wings), jump or hop
- About half of all infested individuals do not know they have lice
- Lice die in a wash machine at temperatures above 50°C? (122° F)
- Head lice infestation is second only to the common cold among communicable diseases
- Lice need parallel hairs in order to move about
- Head lice infestations are most common among Pre-School and Elementary School children
- Head lice are parasites that live off their human hosts
- The food of head lice is human blood
- Only adult lice are capable of changing hosts and starting a new colony
- Girls are much more likely to become infested with head lice than are boys
- Anyone can be infested with head lice in spite of how clean and well-bathed one is
- Head lice prefer washed and clean hair over oily or dirty hair
- Four out of five infested individuals will not feel an itching sensation from a head lice infestation
- Female head lice live about 30 days while males live about 15 days
- Vinegar has no effect on getting rid of head lice
- Only several weeks after infestation does one feel an itching sensation
- Head lice mate only once in their life
- The female head louse can lay between 5-10 eggs per day
- On average an infestation is diagnosed after 4 weeks
- Head lice are basically helpless and unable to move on a smooth surface
- Head lice have more than one dozen breathing openings
- Head lice can live no longer than 48 hours without human blood and generally, due to dehydration, are immobile within 12-18 hours off the host..

MYTHS ABOUT HEAD LICE

- Poor bathing habits encourage lice infestations.
- Head lice can spread disease.

- Head lice are commonly transmitted from a theater seat.
- Head lice drown while the host is swimming.
- Dogs and cats can spread head lice.
- Once you have killed all the hatched lice you are cured.
- Topical anti-lice shampoos are effective at killing lice eggs

Where do head lice come from?

Head lice have been around for millions of years, and dried up lice and their eggs have been found on the hair and scalps of Egyptian mummies! Head lice do not come out of the air or from the ground. They are human parasites that feed on blood and travel from one head to another. Head Lice are uniquely adapted to be on a human head. They would never choose to come off of a head and onto a pillow, hat, chair, etc.

Who can get head lice?

Anyone can. A person's degree of cleanliness or personal hygiene has little or nothing to do with getting head lice. A common misconception is that lice infestation is a result of poor hygienic practices. In fact, head lice actually seem to prefer clean hair over dirty hair.

How are head lice spread?

Head lice can be spread whenever there is direct head to head contact with an infested individual. Less frequently, lice are also transmitted between people by head-to-hand contact and by items such as hats, hair ties, scarves, pillows, etc. However, this type of transfer is quite rare, probably less than two percent of cases are transmitted by the environment. Almost always, head lice is contracted via head to head contact.

Is it possible to get head lice from sharing a pillow or hat with a person who has head lice?

Lice cannot survive off of a human host longer than 24 hours and they are uniquely adapted for living in human head hair. They generally do not like to leave the protected environment created within head hair.

What are the Symptoms of Head Lice?

Head lice are most commonly found on the scalp, behind the ears and near the neckline at the base of the head. Symptoms include a tickling sensation, or feeling something moving through the hair. An allergic reaction to the bites causes itching. Viable eggs are usually located within 1/4 inch (6mm) of the scalp.

What do head lice and their eggs look like?

The adult louse is no bigger than a sesame seed and is grayish-white or tan. Nymphs (baby lice) are smaller, and can be black, clear, or even blood red. Lice eggs, often called nits, look like tiny yellow, tan, or brown dots before they hatch. After hatching, the remaining shell looks white or clear. Nits are literally glued to the hair shaft and are very difficult to remove.

Do head lice jump?

No! Head lice do not jump, fly or swim. They are good crawlers, however, and will readily move from one person to another when the hair of the two people is in contact.

Do head lice carry or transmit any disease?

There are no reliable data to suggest that head lice carry or transmit disease organisms. However, DNA technology shows head lice to be the same species as the notorious body louse which has long been associated with diseases such as typhus and relapsing fever. It may be possible for head lice to carry diseases, but no cases have been reported.

What can be done to get rid of head lice and the eggs?

Increasing numbers of consumers are finding that the most popular treatments for head lice – including chemical shampoos and home remedies – are largely ineffective. Head lice are rapidly evolving chemical resistance to many of the traditional pesticide-based control methods [which have never been able to kill eggs (nits) effectively and usually require repeated treatments]. Louse combs can be effective for removing lice and eggs, but the comb-out process can be very tedious, and many busy parents do not have the time or patience for effective combing. In desperation, some parents resort to home remedies such as bug spray, mayonnaise or kerosene, but there is little hard evidence that these remedies are effective, and some home remedies can actually be harmful. As a result, parents and school authorities are searching for a safe, fast and effective treatment that will solve the problem and help keep children in or quickly return them to school.

The AirAllé® treatment provides exactly that: a safe treatment that is highly effective at not only killing the live lice but also their eggs thus making it a smart choice when dealing with head lice.

What is the life cycle of head lice and their eggs?

Eggs: Eggs are laid by adult female lice and usually take about a week to hatch into nymphs.

Nymphs: Nymphs are immature lice that mature into adults about a week after hatching from the egg.

Adults: Adult lice can live about 30 days on a person's head. If they come off the host, they die within 24 hours. Female adult lice lay 4 to 8 eggs per day and can lay 100 or more eggs during their lifetime. The eggs are glued to hair shafts, and hatch in 4-10 days. It takes another 9-12 days for the female louse to mature. She mates 24 hours later and starts laying eggs.

What is the difference between an egg and a nit?

There is not a difference although a nit is usually referred to as the empty shell and the egg as a viable egg. Sometimes people refer to one or the other in relation to its viability.

How can I tell if the nits are dead or alive?

Children, like adults, do not want nits in their hair- dead or alive. The time it would take to make the distinction is time far better spent removing ALL the nits. Some people will “pop” them and confirm its viability. Just because there is a louse inside does not confirm the fact that it was alive. Some products do have an ovicidal effect killing louse in the egg and some eggs are just laid and do not survive.

Are children the only ones who get head lice?

While it's more commonly spread among children, parents and other adults are not immune.

When hair has contact with another's hair (and it will), if that person has lice and you are a favorable environment, you take the risk of exposing yourself to an uninvited houseguest.

Isn't it a sign of being dirty?

Head lice actually prefer a clean head of hair. Lice, however, are not prejudicial. A louse's only concern is for its own survival. To accomplish this, the louse needs to feed and is always looking for the most convenient means of doing so.

Do pets get head lice?

No. Head lice cannot live on pets. Head lice can only live on human heads.

Can head lice 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..

What are some steps I can take to help prevent and control the spread of head lice?

Avoid head to head contact during play, sleepovers, or other activities at home, school, and elsewhere. Do not share combs, brushes or towels used by an infested person. Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, hair ribbons or barrettes. Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that an infested person used or wore during the previous 2 days using a hot water laundry cycle and high heat drying cycle. Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs; they are not necessary to control head lice and can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

Do I have to treat everyone if only one person is found to have head lice?

It is very common for close family or friends of infested individuals to also have lice. It is suggested that you check everyone in the household. You do not want to treat anyone who does not have lice, however many clients who have a family member with lice will choose to have a dimethicone oil treatment. This treatment, which is completely non-toxic, is a quick and easy way to kill any small bug that may be in the hair, but is very hard to find.

How do I treat my home for head lice?

Vacuum the carpet and furniture; wash bedding and clothing in very hot water; place pillows in a dryer at highest heat setting for 20 to 30 minutes;

boil hair ties/hair brushes for 10 to 20 minutes or freeze them in a plastic bag overnight. Head lice cannot survive off of a human head for more than 24 hours. Fresh Heads recommends that you do not use pesticide sprays in your home; they will unnecessarily expose your household to harmful chemicals.

What do I do with furniture?

Lice are not environmental pests so pesticide sprays for furniture and bedding are unnecessary. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals and cars.

Should I bag stuffed animals and bedding?

Actual clinical results show that lice cannot live past 16 hours without feeding on a blood meal. Bag the items or isolate the items that cannot be washed for 3 days to starve and kill all lice that may have landed on them. All other washables and bed linens can be put in the washer and dryer for the lice to be washed away or killed during the cycle. Wash all items in HOT water and machine dried on HOT cycle. Wash only items that cover the bed and pillows cases, not underlying covers, pillows, underlying padding.

What about combs, Brushes, and Hair accessories?

You can place them on the top rack of the dishwasher or soak items in HOT (not boiling) water for 20 minutes. You can also put them in a plastic bag in the freezer for 24 hours.

How many cases of head lice are there?

Precise data on how many people get head lice each year is not available. The CDC estimates that between 6 and 12 million children between the ages of 3 and 11 contract head lice each year. That is one in 5 children! This number

does not include mothers, who contract lice from their kids about 85% of the time!