

Interesting Facts About Head Lice

- ❖ Until a few years ago, approaches to head lice were based on old wives tales, misconceptions and marketing departments for the companies who made products for profit from head lice hysteria. Luckily, we now have research upon which to base our practice.
- ❖ Head lice are not a sign of uncleanliness; they love clean hair because it is easier to latch on.
- ❖ Lice do not hop, fly or jump; the only way they can get from one person to another is direct touching, head-to-head.
- ❖ Lice are not passed on pets. The only place head lice can survive and thrive is on the human head.
- ❖ When found most cases of head lice are already more than a month old. Head lice do not like the light so they scurry under the hair when the hair is parted and escape detention until they are too numerous to hide. One sign is a red itchy rash on the back of the neck, just below the hair line.
- ❖ Because of use and overuse of head lice shampoos, head lice have become resistant to the products that once would kill them, so no head lice product is 100 % effective, even if you follow the directions to the letter. That is why combing and nit removal is important.
- ❖ A new alternative to shampoos and nit combing is a product many parents have found successful: **Robicomb**, made by LiceGuard. This is an electronic comb that uses a single AA battery to detect and kill lice. Besides being easy to use, it is non-toxic and can be used for the whole family. Please contact me for information or a demo if interested in using this product.
- ❖ Never treat or retreat "just in case" in the absence of live lice. Most head lice products are pesticides, which are toxic if overused and can be absorbed through the skin. Follow the directions carefully.
- ❖ Removing the nits (eggs) and live lice with a special metal-tooth comb is time-consuming but the most effective way to get rid of them. They do not wash out.
- ❖ Hats and coats touching in school are not sources of lice and there is no need to separate or bag them. A louse on a hat or coat is a dying louse that will not be capable of reproducing. Healthy ones stay close to the scalp until they sense another human head. They cannot survive without blood. That is why they bite.
- ❖ Head lice are not a source of infection or disease; they are simply a nuisance.
- ❖ School-wide head checks are not recommended or endorsed by the Harvard School of Public Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, or the Centers for Disease Control. The most effective screening occurs when parents check their own children at home, treat if any are found, and make efforts to remove the nits.
- ❖ One of the biggest challenges in eliminating head lice is parents' discomfort in communicating about the problem with other parents when they find head lice, so they are more easily passed back and forth among close friends and relatives.
- ❖ "No-nit" policies, i.e. not allowing children back into school with nits even though treated, is no longer practiced in most schools because it has been proven that these policies do not impact the spread of lice.
- ❖ You will always be able to find web sites that promote drastic measures like sprays, special products and "no-nit" policies. Pay attention to who they are! Many of these web sites are either not based on up-to-date research or are commercial sites are in the business of selling a product, and it is in their interests to keep Head Lice Hysteria alive, otherwise there go their profits.
- ❖ Shaving the head or cutting the hair will not affect how easily a child catches lice, though these make nit removal easier. Don't do this unless your child wants you to. A child's self-esteem is much more important than a few missed nits.
- ❖ Grandma's old remedy of kerosene for head lice does not work and is dangerous! Children have died from inhaling the vapors, or from being burned because it is highly flammable. Never use kerosene!
- ❖ **Children with head lice may return to school the same day after treatment is completed.** They will first need to be re-checked by the school nurse, or designated office staff and if lice-free, may return to class. Missing additional days of school due to head lice is not an excused absence.
- ❖ School nurses are supportive advocates who will help you obtain lice shampoo/combs and use them properly. We will assist you in checking or rechecking as you work to remove n\lice and or nits from your child's head. Just ask.
- ❖ School nurses will not judge you or report you or tell others if you ask for assistance dealing with head lice. We handle lice in a confidential manner. We know that any families can catch them, and most of us who are parents have been through it at least once ourselves.

See the research:

<http://www.cdc.gov/lice/head/schools.html>

<http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=237>

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;110/3/638>

