



minnesota  
**Lice Lady**

## Lice Myths & Facts

**Myth: Lice jump, fly, hop from people, animals or environment onto your head**

**Fact:** Human lice are only transmitted between people and never come from animals

**Fact:** Head lice can only crawl (not fly) from human head to head

**Fact:** Adult lice can only live a maximum of 48 hours off of a human head; baby lice (nymphs) can survive only a couple hours

**Fact:** Transmission of head lice from inanimate objects (the environment) is very uncommon

**Study:** 0% lice found on 1000 hats from the 1000 children who had more than 5500 lice on their combined heads <http://www.benthamsience.com/open/todj/articles/V004/SI0062TODJ/72TODJ.pdf>

**Study:** only 4% live lice were found on infested subjects' pillowcases <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>

**Study:** over 450 students had active infestations with over 14,000 lice combined, but the floors of their 108 classrooms did not have even *one* louse - they were completely uninfested <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>

**Check the Experts:** <http://www.cdc.gov/lice/head/faqs.html>

**Myth: Lice is at epidemic levels**

**Fact:** MN school nurses tell us lice outbreaks occur yearly and there's not a dramatic increase over previous years

**Fact:** Summer 2011 MN Lice Lady performed 1000+ head checks at summer camps. Per camp session only 3-5 cases out of 160 campers were positively identified with lice (and subsequently treated) by MN Lice Lady. This 2-4% is higher than the 1% to 1.6% generally quoted by CDC and studies, but still considerable low.

**Fact:** Outbreaks are not easily eradicated with the OTC pesticide of permethrin due to pesticide resistance

**Fact:** We regularly see live lice on clients' heads after home treatments of NIX and RID (permethrin based products)

**Study:** After 3 hours, only 53% of lice exposed to RID were dead. The ovicidal activity (nits killed) was 69%.

<http://archderm.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=478258>

**Check the Experts:**

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/archives/1999-releases/press09141999.html>

<http://archderm.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/139/8/994.pdf>

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

<https://identify.us.com/idmybug/head-lice/head-lice-FAQS/index.html>

**Myth: Lice is easy to get (casual contact)**

**Fact:** This actually depends on the level of infestation of the neighboring head

**Fact:** Lice require very specific spatial and kinetic conditions in order to crawl over and grasp a neighbor's hair

**Study:** only 7.1% of hair to hair transmission attempts worked (34 out of 480); the louse had to be oriented outward on the hair (not ready to feed at the base of scalp), the neighboring hair had to be parallel to the hair the louse was on, the neighboring hair had to move very slowly (4 m per minute)

<http://www.nature.com/jid/journal/v119/n3/full/5601602a.html>

**Check the Experts:**

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6556831>



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**Myth: Re-infestation from classmates is common**

**Fact:** Re-infestations are often the same infestation which was never completely eradicated and has erupted again.

**Fact:** The Head Lice Life Cycle illustrates that a couple missed nits can take upwards of 22 days (more than 3 weeks!) to become adults before a new egg is laid - and most likely another week before enough nits are visible to spot. That's one month, well outside the recommended two week time frame to check after an infestation.

**Check the Experts:** <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/>

**Myth: Visually looking through the hair is the best way to identify active head lice infestations**

**Fact:** Using a professional grade nit comb to identify an infestation is more accurate in identifying active infestations than through a visual inspection

**Fact:** Lice scurry very quickly away from movement and light making them very difficult to spot in a visual inspection

**Fact:** Without using a nit comb to screen a large group of children, smaller infestations (a couple bugs that have recently crossed over) will be impossible to diagnose in a couple of minutes

**Fact:** Minnesota Lice Lady only uses a professional grade nit comb during all screenings

**Study:** "Direct visual examinations alone without combing underestimated active infestations"

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2724133/>

**Study:** Expert parasitologists discovered that using a professional nit comb was 4 times more accurate and 2 times faster than direct visual examination for the detection of live head lice

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2724133/>

**Myth: You have to have an itchy head to have lice**

**Fact:** You can have lice up to 4-6 weeks before you begin itching your scalp and 50% of infested people have no symptoms at all

**Fact:** In ongoing infestations habituation can occur and itching decreases

**Fact:** Lice bites and nits are commonly found behind the ears, crown of head and nape of neck

**Check the Experts:**

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

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/cdc/factsheets/head-lice.pdf>

**Myth: If you have head lice you must have poor hygiene**

**Fact:** Lice are opportunistic bugs, surviving only on human blood; they are not affected by cleanliness or dirtiness in their need to survive

**Fact:** Lice like clean and healthy scalps; experts believe dirty hair is slippery therefore harder to glue nits (eggs) to

**Check the Experts:**

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

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cdped.shtml>

**Myth: If one person has lice you should treat the entire family**

**Fact:** Doing correct head checks on all family members is crucial; treating all "to be safe" is an unnecessary waste of time and energy

**Check the Experts:**

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/housingandclothing/dk1030.html>

**Myth: Head lice transmit diseases**

**Fact:** Head lice are not carriers of pathogens

**Fact:** Body lice, a completely different strain of lice, do transmit pathogens

**Check the Experts:** <http://www.cdc.gov/lice/>



**Myth: Nits (eggs) will hatch after pulled off the hair**

**Fact:** Nits need a warm incubator (the head) and humidity in order to hatch

**Fact:** Newly emerged nymphs need to feed promptly or will die within a couple hours

**Fact:** Nits are laid close to the scalp and are usually viable within 1/4 inch from the scalp

**Fact:** Nits found 1/2 inch or more away from scalp are less likely to be viable

**Check the Experts:**

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/headlice/forhcp.html>

[http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen\\_info/faqs\\_treat.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs_treat.html)

**Myth: Vital to bag items for two weeks to prevent reinfestation**

**Fact:** Lice start dehydrating immediately and die between 3 hours (nymphs) to 48 hours (adults) off their host

**Fact:** Nits need precise heat and humidity conditions (incubator) in order to hatch. This is found only on a human head

**Fact:** Newly emerged nymphs need to feed promptly or will die within a couple hours

**Fact:** Lice is transmitted through hair to hair contact and have hook claws to ensure they don't accidentally "fall" off a hair shaft into the environment

**Study:** Over 450 students had active infestations of over 14,000 lice, but the floors of their 108 classrooms did not have even *one* nit (or louse!) – they were completely uninfested <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>

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