

## **Head Lice Myths and Facts**

School is back in session and with younger students one often thinks of head lice when children are together in large groups. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics most cases of head lice are not acquired in school. In most circumstances a child has had head lice for approximately one month before they are detected.

Here are some other myths and facts about head lice:

Myth: Head lice spread easily and will spread rapidly through a classroom.

Fact: Head lice do not jump or hop and cannot be spread by pets. They crawl and so are only spread by direct head to head contact. Indirect spread with shared combs or hats is possible but much less likely. The lice actually really like to stay on the head they are currently on unless it becomes over crowded.

Myth: Students should be sent home from school immediately and they and all their family members should be treated if either nits or lice are found.

Fact: In most cases the student has had lice for a month before it is detected so rushing the student out of school is pointless. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend treatment unless live lice are found. The rest of the household should be checked but not treated unless live lice are found.

Myth: Head lice can live on pillows, couches, and other objects and infest the next person that happens by.

Fact: Head lice live less than 24 hours off the human body and their eggs cannot hatch at temperatures lower than those found near the scalp.

Myth: The presence of head lice means the person is “dirty” and has poor hygiene.

Fact: Head lice are not significantly affected by the length of hair or how often the person shampoos his or her hair.

Myth: Head lice can spread disease.

Fact: Head lice are not a disease and have never been associated with spread of any disease. Head lice are a nuisance.

If you have any questions about head lice or other health issues please contact the nurse at your child's school. We are there to help you and your family with health issues.