



## Head Lice - Facts & Tips

As the school year begins, it's important to be reminded of head lice and how they can be avoided. "Lice are typically spread through head to head contact with someone who has an active lice infestation," explains Annie Wendt, Manager of Infection Prevention at Bronson Healthcare. Although it is rare, lice can also be transmitted through indirect contact. "This can include sharing of bedding or items such as hair brushes, scarves and hats," says Wendt.

The Michigan Department of Community Health points out that there are many ways children might have head to head contact that can lead to lice transmission. Those include slumber parties, sport activities, shared beds and reading circles.<sup>1</sup>

While anyone can get head lice, some people are at greater risk than others. These people can include:

- Children between ages 3 and 11 years.
- Girls are more likely to get head lice than boys, possibly because of their play styles and sharing of personal items.<sup>2</sup>
- People with long or short hair can contract head lice. Although all races can get lice, studies show children of African American descent are less likely to become infested.<sup>2</sup>

Management and treatment of head lice includes:

- Careful inspection of the hair and scalp to identify lice and/or nits correctly
- Use of head lice medicated hair products
- Cleaning of personal items and the environment
- Repeat treatment as instructed

### Facts about head lice:<sup>1</sup>

- Lice do not spread any known disease.
- When off the human body, they can't survive more than 36 hours.
- Lice do not hop, jump or fly so sitting next to someone with head lice does not increase the risk of getting lice.

There are many resources available to help parents understand the facts about head lice. For more information about preventing and treating head lice, as well as common myths and facts, visit [michigan.gov/documents](http://michigan.gov/documents).

*This article is brought to you by Bronson Children's Hospital, southwest Michigan's only children's hospital. For more information about children's health, visit [bronsonhealth.com/children](http://bronsonhealth.com/children).*

<sup>1</sup> Michigan Department of Community Health: [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final\\_Michigan\\_Head\\_Lice\\_Manual\\_106828\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_Michigan_Head_Lice_Manual_106828_7.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Head Lice Epidemiology: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/epi.html>.