

Head Lice Fact Sheet — No. 5

Myths, misconceptions and truths about head lice treatment



1. Using poisons or flammable liquids like gasoline, kerosene, paint thinner or insect repellent may harm your child more than it would the lice. Chemicals should never be used unless they are approved by the FDA for the specific treatment of head lice.



2. Do not use hair dryers to kill lice or their eggs! The temperature would have to be turned up so high it could easily cause serious burns on the scalp. Burns occur when the hot dryer is either held too close to the scalp or pointed on each section too long!



3. Hair gels, hairspray, oils or other non-medicated hair products including dandruff shampoo will not kill lice or prevent eggs from hatching or sticking to the hair.



4. Old-fashion remedies aren't completely effective. Vinegar rinses or mayonnaise might kill lice but do not kill nits or detach them from hair. The nits will still hatch and your child will be infested again. (See Fact Sheet #4 for ways to treat head lice.)



5. Cutting your child's hair or shaving their head to get rid of lice won't keep them away. Lice stick to short and just "grown in" hair, too!

6. Lice don't hide in building cracks like cockroaches or sand boxes like other tiny insects. So treating homes or schools with bug sprays or other pesticides would waste money and may harm children and adults around the treated areas.



7. Your pets and other animals don't carry head lice and can't contract head lice from people.



8. Always check with your physician or health clinic before using any new treatment or device "claiming to get rid of lice and nits." In most cases these are not yet proven and not yet approved by the FDA.

9. Medications that are FDA approved for head lice treatments, whether prescription or over-the-counter are safe and effective for children over the age of two. For children younger than two, check with your physician.



The Centers for Disease control and Prevention's Web site on head lice has more information about the specific medications found in head lice products. Go to www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/default.htm for this and other information.