

## Appendix 1

From: [www.besttreatments.bmj.com](http://www.besttreatments.bmj.com)

### **Myths about head lice**

One confusing thing about head lice is that there are many things said about them that are not proven. For example, some people think they need to wash their hats, clothes and bedding to get rid of head lice that might have fallen out of their hair. But head lice attach themselves firmly to the hair. They never willingly leave one head unless there is another one nearby to climb onto. *The chances of catching head lice from a pillow or hat are very small.* Also, head lice can't live very long once they are separated from a person's head.

### **How do head lice spread?**

Head lice spread by crawling from one person's hair to another's. Here's a look at how you can (and can't) catch head lice.

You can't catch head lice just by standing next to someone who has them. Head lice usually spread among people who spend a lot of time in close contact, such as family members and school friends. You won't catch head lice by briefly brushing heads with someone who has them either. Your head needs to be in contact with someone else's for a while. Head lice move quite slowly: it takes them about 30 seconds to move from one head to another.<sup>2</sup>

Head lice can't fly from one hair to another because they don't have wings. They can move only across hairs that are touching each other.

It is very unlikely you'll catch head lice by wearing a hat that has been worn by someone who has head lice. Head lice have a strong grip, so they're unlikely to fall out of someone's hair. If you see a head louse on a pillow, a piece of clothing or a hat, it's probably dead or dying. It may not even be a head louse. It could be skin that has been shed by a louse. You cannot catch head lice from this skin.<sup>3</sup>

From [www.headliceadvice.net](http://www.headliceadvice.net)

### **How are head lice spread?**

Head lice are only caught by prolonged head-to-head contact of at least 30 seconds.

They are extremely unlikely to be caught by sharing hats and hairbrushes, since the lice cannot survive away from the warmth of the human head. Their tight grip on the hair with their 'claws' ensures they do not accidentally fall off the head. Any lice found on hats, brushes or pillowcases are either dead or dying and are too weak to crawl back onto the head.

They cannot be spread by pets as they only live on the human head. Pets do not sweat through their coat so it's not humid enough for lice to thrive.

Anyone can catch head lice but children aged 4-12 are more prone to catching them. This is because they touch heads frequently during play. For the same reason, girls tend to get them more than boys. Tying back long hair does not really help prevent the spread of head lice since the lice rarely venture far from the warmth of the scalp.

It's also not true that short hair will keep lice at bay since they need only 3mm of hair to live on.