

PUBIC LICE (CRABS)

“Crabs” are members of the lice family. They are flat-backed, wingless, and grayish-white or reddish-brown in colour.

Crabs are usually found in the pubic area where they attach to the short, coarse pubic hair. They can also be found in the underarms, mustaches, beards, eyebrows and eyelashes.

You can get crabs when you have sex with a person who has crabs or by sharing their bedding, towels or clothing.

What To Look For

The most common sign of crabs is itching in the genital area. Tiny specks of dark brown waste materials from the crab may be seen on underwear, bed sheets and body skin. The lice may be visible or you may see tiny blue spots where the lice have bitten you.

What may seem like dandruff flakes at the base of pubic hair are actually crab nits (eggs).

Treatment

- A medicated treatment can be bought at a drugstore without a prescription. Talk to a doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant or breast feeding.
- Follow the instructions that come with the medication very carefully.

- Put lotion on every hairy part of your body except your head. Talk to a doctor if you have lice on your eyebrows, eyelashes or beard as a different medication will be needed.
- Put on freshly washed, clean clothing after the treatment and again after showering the lotion off.
- On the same day that you use the medicated treatment, wash clothing, bedding and towels in hot water. Place in dryer on hottest cycle for 20 minutes. Dry clean anything that can not be washed or pack loosely in a sealed plastic bag for 1 week.
- Vacuum and spray mattresses and pillows with a household disinfectant.
- Vacuum rugs, bed and furniture.

You will probably only need one treatment. If you still have symptoms, you can use the treatment one more time in the same week. Do not treat yourself more than two times in one week.

Your sexual contact(s) or anyone who has shared your bed, towels or clothing in the last month should be treated at the same time. You should also consider testing for other sexually transmitted infections.

**For more information, call
Peel Public Health 905-799-7700
and ask for
Sexual Health Information or Communicable Disease
or visit
intheknowpeel.ca peelsexualhealth.ca peelregion.ca**