

PUBIC LICE FACT SHEET

What is pubic lice?

Pubic lice is caused by crab-like insects that bury into the skin and lay their eggs near the base of the short, coarse pubic hair.

They can also be found in the underarms, mustaches, beards, eyebrows and eyelashes.

You can get pubic lice (also called crabs) when you have sex with a person or share bedding, towels or clothing with a person who has public lice.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The most common sign of crabs is skin irritation, itching and redness in the genital area. Tiny specks of dark brown waste materials from the crab may be seen on underwear or bed sheets. You may be able to see the lice or 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). Scratching can cause the skin to become raw and lead to other skin irritations.

Treatment

Proper treatment and good cleaning should get rid of lice.

- A medicated lotion can be bought at a drugstore without a prescription. Talk to a doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant or breast feeding.
- Carefully follow the instructions that come with the medication.
- Put medicated 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 cannot be washed or pack loosely in a sealed plastic bag for 1 week.
- Put articles in a non-food freezer for 24 hours to kill the lice.
- 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. Avoid sexual contact until you are both treated and have no symptoms. You should also consider testing for other sexually transmitted infections.

Remember:

Condom use will help prevent the spread of STIs, HIV and Hepatitis B.

For further information, talk to your health care professional, call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 or visit intheknowpeel.ca peelsexualhealth.ca peelregion.ca/health