



August 2011

# Pubic Lice

## What is Pubic Lice?

Pubic lice, also known as crabs, are small grey or brownish-red insects that live mostly on pubic hair. They may occasionally live on the hair of the chest, armpits, eyelashes, eyebrows and moustaches. Pubic lice lay their eggs at the base of the hair. These eggs are commonly known as nits. It usually takes the eggs eight to nine days to hatch, but they may stay dormant for up to 17 days. The lice live by feeding on human blood. They can live 24 hours away from the human body.

## Symptoms of Pubic Lice

Pubic lice can be diagnosed by finding adult lice or nits on the pubic hair.

## How Pubic Lice spreads

Pubic lice spread during close physical contact, such as sexual contact, or sharing the same bed, towels and clothing.

## Diagnosing Pubic Lice

Pubic lice can be diagnosed by finding adult lice or nits on the pubic hair.

## Complications of Pubic Lice

Scratching the infested areas can lead to skin infection.

## Treating Pubic Lice

Several creams and shampoos are available without a prescription at pharmacies. Ask a pharmacist to help you choose the right products and how to use them properly. It is important to follow the instructions to make sure you treat all the lice and nits.

Note: Infection of eyelashes should not be treated with the creams and shampoos recommended for treating pubic lice.

Wash and dry infested clothing, linens and towels using the hot settings on your washer and dryer to kill the lice, or have these items dry-cleaned. Vacuum household items such as sofas, mattresses and rugs to get rid of the lice and nits.

For further information, please call:  
**York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653**  
**TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)**

## What about sexual partners?

Sexual partner(s) within the last month and household members should be checked and treated if they have lice.

## Is a follow-up important?

Follow-up is not needed unless you have a skin infection or you get reinfested with lice.

Remember to:

- follow the instructions that come with the treatment product
- clean all infested clothing, bed linens, towels or other household items
- inform sexual partner(s) and household members to check for lice and treat if they have lice
- use condoms to lower the chance of getting STIs and to prevent pregnancy

Note: It is possible to have more than one infection at a time, so it is important to be tested for other STIs.

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