

Pubic lice

Also known as crabs

Pubic lice are tiny parasite insects that infest the pubic hair, armpits or chest hair and can be passed on by skin-to-skin contact.

QUICK FACTS

- Pubic lice are tiny parasite insects that cling to pubic hair and suck blood
- The main symptom is itchiness in the pubic area; some people have no symptoms at all
- Pubic lice are diagnosed by careful inspection of the affected area
- Topical creams or lotions are usually used to treat pubic lice

What is this?

Pubic lice infest pubic hair and sometimes hair of the armpits, eyebrows, eyelashes, beard and torso.

Lice infestation causes no serious harm-but is a warning that you should be tested for other sexually transmissible infections.

Pubic lice do not tend to infect head hair.

How do you get it?

Pubic lice are usually passed on through skin-to-skin sexual contact.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptom is itchiness in the affected area.-This is often worse at night.

Lice, lice eggs and nits (empty eggshells) can sometimes be seen, especially at the base of hairs.

Some people have no symptoms and so they do not know they have pubic lice.-

How do you test for it?

Pubic lice are diagnosed by careful inspection of the affected area.

How is it treated?

Topical creams or lotions are usually used to treat pubic lice:

- apply the cream to the affected area and wash off after 20 minutes
- wash clothing and bedding at the same time. Machine washing and drying is sufficient
- shaving pubic hair can be helpful

If you have been diagnosed with pubic lice, you should tell any sexual partners from the last month so they can be examined and treated by their doctor.

Is it likely to come back after treatment?

Sometimes a second treatment is required one week later.

Where can I get help?

- Visit a [sexual health service near you](#)
- Visit your local doctor
- Visit your local community health centre

DISCLAIMER

This fact sheet provides general sexual health information and is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor.

If you have concerns about your health, you should seek advice from your doctor.

If you require urgent care, you should go to your nearest Emergency Department or call [000](#).