

## Pubic Lice

### What are pubic lice?

- Pubic lice, also known as “crabs”, are parasites that can live in the pubic or genital area of humans.
- Pubic lice are different from head or body lice.
- They may also be found on coarse body hair like the thighs, chest, armpits, eyebrows or moustache/beard.
- Pubic lice are very small (the size of a pinhead). They are reddish-brown or light gray in color and can be seen moving in the hair. They live for about 3 weeks. They survive for about 24 hours off the body.
- Adult pubic lice lay eggs called “nits”. Nits look like small, brown dots that cannot be pulled or washed off the hair. Nits hatch after 7-10 days.

### How are pubic lice spread?

- Pubic lice are generally spread by skin-to-skin contact during sex with an infected person.
- Sometimes pubic lice are spread when people share bedding, clothing or towels.
- People with pubic lice should also be tested for sexually transmitted infections.
- Pubic lice in children may be a sign of sexual abuse.

### How is pubic lice diagnosed?

- The pubic hair is examined for signs of lice or nits.

### What are the symptoms of pubic lice?

- It may take several days for symptoms to appear.
- Symptoms include:
  - Itchiness that is worse at night;
  - Dark red dots on your skin or in your underwear;
  - Visible nits or crawling lice.

### How are pubic lice treated?

- Pubic lice and nits are treated with a special medicated shampoo or lotion. These shampoos or lotions are available at a drugstore and do not require a prescription. Talk to a pharmacist if you are unsure of what product to buy or if you are pregnant.
- Read the label on the shampoo or lotion bottle and do **exactly** what the directions tell you to do.
- More than one treatment may be needed if symptoms do not go away. Do not treat the area more than twice in one week.
- Sexual partners or anyone who has shared a bed, clothing or towel with the infected person must also be treated at the same time.
- Wash clothing, bedding and towels that were used before and after treatment in hot soapy water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Bedding or clothing that cannot be washed should be dry cleaned or packed loosely and sealed in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum mattresses and other sleeping surfaces. Do not use household lice sprays on your body or on bedding and clothing.

### How can pubic lice be prevented?

- By not having any sexual or close contact with an infected person.
- Do not share towels, bedding or other personal items.

### References:

Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (2010),  
Teens Health (2010)

## Sexually Transmitted Infection

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***For more information contact:  
your local public health office,  
OR your physician or nurse practitioner,  
OR HealthLine at 811,  
OR the following sexual health clinics:***

Saskatoon Sexual Health Program  
#100 – 310 Idylwyld Drive North  
SASKATOON, SK S7L 0Z2  
*To speak with a nurse Mon-Fri, 9-12 pm*  
Phone: 306-655-4642

Regina STI Clinic  
2110 Hamilton Street  
REGINA, SK S4P 2E3  
Phone: 306-766-7788

Prince Albert Parkland Sexual Health Clinic  
101 15<sup>th</sup> Street East  
PRINCE ALBERT, SK S6V 1G1  
Phone: 306-765-6540

Battlefords Sexual Health Clinic  
Rm. 104, 1192 – 101 Street  
NORTH BATTLEFORD, SK S9A 0Z6  
Phone: 306-937-6846

Meadow Lake Sexual Health Services  
Meadow Lake Associate Clinic  
218 Centre St.  
MEADOW LAKE, SK S9X 1H2  
*To speak with a Nurse Tue 1-4:30 pm*  
Phone: 306-236-5661