

### **What about my partner?**

Your sexual partner will also need to be treated, even if they don't have any signs or symptoms.

### **When can I have sex again?**

You can have sex again after both you and your partner have completed the full treatment.

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Produced by the HSE Sexual Health Programme



## **A guide to Pubic Lice (Crabs)**

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[sexualwellbeing.ie](http://sexualwellbeing.ie)



### What are pubic lice?

Pubic lice are tiny insects that live in coarse hair (hair on the chest, abdomen, underarms and pubic areas). They do not live in head hair.

Their eggs are called 'nits'.

Pubic lice are spread by close physical contact.

If you have pubic lice, we recommend that you have routine tests for all sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV.

### How do I get pubic lice?

Pubic lice are spread through close body contact with someone who has them.

The lice crawl from hair to hair but cannot fly or jump. They need human blood to survive, so generally only leave the body to move from one person to another. They do not live on other animals such as cats or dogs.

Pubic lice are most commonly passed on during sexual contact. Condoms will not prevent them from being passed to another person.

Having pubic lice does not mean that someone has poor personal hygiene.

It is also possible for pubic lice to be spread through sharing clothes, towels and bedding.

### What symptoms would I have with pubic lice?

You may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- itching
- black spots (from the lice droppings) on your underwear
- brown lice eggs in your pubic hair
- small blood spots on your skin or underwear.

The most common symptom of pubic lice is intense itching. The itching is caused by an allergy to the droppings of the louse. It can take between 1 to 3 weeks for itching to develop, and it will usually be worse at night.

### How can I be tested for pubic lice?

Pubic lice are diagnosed by a careful clinical examination. This can be done by your GP or at a sexual health clinic.

### How are pubic lice treated?

Pubic lice are treated with a cream, shampoo or lotion that you can get over the counter in your local pharmacy. This treatment is repeated after 3 to 7 days.

You do not need to shave off your body hair. You can remove nits (eggs) with a special comb available in pharmacies.

Everyone that you have had close body contact with should be treated at the same time.

You will need to wash all your clothing, including bed clothing, in a hot (50 degree or higher) wash to kill the lice and avoid re-infection.