

Crabs/Pubic Lice

What is it?

Crabs are small insects called lice that grip onto the hair near the vagina or penis. They are shaped like tiny crabs and usually live in pubic hair. Sometimes they also attach to hair on your chest, armpits, beards and eyelashes. Pubic lice are different to head lice. Lice infestation causes no serious harm, but is a warning that you should be tested for other sexually transmitted infections.

How do I know if I have it?

The most common symptom is itching in the pubic hair.

How did I get it?

Crabs are passed on by close body contact, usually sexual, with a person who has them

How can I make sure I don't get it?

It is hard to prevent transmission of crabs because they are easy to catch from close body contact. Avoid sexual contact with someone who has lice until they have been treated and the lice are gone.

How will know if I have it?

Crabs can be seen if you check the pubic hair closely, in a good light. You may also notice little eggs stuck to the pubic hair.

How can I get rid of it?

Crabs can be treated quickly and easily with a special lotion. Your doctor or pharmacist can suggest which lotion to use. Follow the instructions carefully. Treatment is usually repeated after 7 days. Shaving does not work as it won't get rid of all the lice or eggs.

Wash any clothing and linen that you have used within the last week. Treat your sexual partner/s at the same time. If you do not treat crabs the itching will continue and the crabs may spread further.

Who do I need to tell and why?

If you have crabs it is important to tell your sexual partner so they can be treated. You may have to tell housemates who have shared clothing or linen with you. Your doctor can help you decide who may be at risk and help you to contact them.

This fact sheet is just some general information. If you are worried about your health go and see a doctor.

For more information or support visit:

For more information on STIs and safe sex visit the Play Safe website:
www.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au

Sexual Health Info Link is a service that you can call up for information on STIs and sexual health. It's anonymous and non-judgemental. Call: 1800 451 624 or visit <https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/>

"Let them know" allows you to send an anonymous messages to tell someone you've had sex with that they have come into contact with the infection: <http://www.letthemknow.org.au/>