Document 25

Home Illnesses and conditions Sexual and reproductive Pubic lice British Sign Language (BSL)   
  
  |   
  
   
  
 简体中文   
  
  |   
  
   
  
 Polski   
  
  |   
  
   
  
 Română   
  
  |   
  
   
  
 slovenčina Pubic lice, also known as crabs, are tiny insects that live on coarse human body hair, such as pubic hair around the penis or vagina. Pubic lice are not linked to poor personal hygiene. It can take up to 3 weeks after coming into contact with pubic lice before you notice any symptoms. The most common symptom of pubic lice is itchy red spots. The itching is caused by an allergy to the lice saliva or poo. It can take 1 to 3 weeks for itching to develop after the first infestation, and it’ll usually be worse at night. Public lice are very small (2mm long) and grey-brown in colour. They’re hard to spot, but sometimes you may be able to see them in your hair. They live mostly on pubic hair, but can also be found in hair on the chest, armpits, face and eyelashes. They do not affect hair on your head. You may also notice the following symptoms: If you think you might have pubic lice, get checked for free by: There is no test for pubic lice. Your doctor or nurse will check your hair for lice. They may check your pubic hair around your penis or vagina and any other areas that could be affected. To help spot any pubic lice, your doctor or nurse may use a comb and a magnifying lens. You can also buy treatment over the counter at your local pharmacy although they will not be able to diagnose the infestation. Pubic lice are treated with medicated creams or shampoos that kill the lice. You’ll usually need to use treatment on your whole body and leave it on for a few hours before washing it off. You’ll need to repeat this a week later to make sure all the lice have been killed. You may be asked to come back to your GP practice or sexual health clinic once you’ve finished treatment to check the treatment has worked. Your partner(s) should also be treated, even if they do not have symptoms. Some pubic lice can be resistant to treatment. Resistance means that the lice will not be affected by a particular treatment. If your symptoms don’t settle, you may need to try more than one type of treatment. Speak to your GP practice or local sexual health clinic if your first treatment hasn’t worked. Treatment of lice in the eye area is usually different from elsewhere. Certain creams and lotions are not safe for use near the eye area. Lice here can be removed with tweezers or Vaseline can be used to suffocate the lice before removal. While you’re being treated for pubic lice, there are some things you can do to help stop the lice from spreading. Pubic lice are spread through close body contact with someone who has them, most commonly sexual contact.