

LICE-PEDICULOSIS (HEAD LICE; BODY LICE; CRAB LICE)

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

5.5

DESCRIPTION

Lice are tiny parasites that live on the body or in clothing. Pediculosis (lice infestation) is the medical term. Three types of lice affect humans: head lice, body lice, and crab (pubic) lice.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Severe itching
- Eggs (“nits”) on hair shafts (looks like grains of salt)
- Scalp inflammation and matted hair
- Red bite marks and hives
- Tiny brown specks in undergarments (dried blood from the lice feeding on the host)

CAUSES

Tiny (1mm to 3mm) parasites that bite through skin to obtain nourishment (blood). The bites cause itching, inflammation, and soreness. Some lice live on skin, although they are difficult to see. Others live in clothing near skin. Eggs (nits) adhere to hairs.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Crowded living conditions
- Contact with an infected object such as combs, hats, clothing, bedding, towels
- Contact with an infected person
- For crab lice, sexual intercourse with an infected person

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Bathe and shampoo often.
Don't share combs, brushes or hats with others. Wash combs and brushes carefully.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Usually curable with over-the-counter or prescription medications. Creams, lotions, or shampoos specifically formulated for the treatment of lice are available over-the-counter. Allow 5 days after treatment for symptoms to disappear. Lice often recur.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Infection at the site

GENERAL MEASURES

The following measures apply to all members of the household, and to any sexual partners of household members:

- Use the medicated shampoo, cream or lotion.
- Machine-wash all clothing and linen in hot water. Dry in the dryer's hot-air cycle. Iron the clothing and linen, if possible. Washing removes the lice, and ironing destroys nits.
- If you don't have a washing machine, iron clothes and linen, or seal for 10 days in a plastic bag to kill lice and nits.
- Dry-clean non-washable items or seal in plastic bag for 10 days.
- Boil articles such as combs, curlers, hairbrushes and barrettes. Hair does not have to be shaved.
- Spray all furniture that comes in contact with infected body areas with insecticide.

MEDICATION

- Nonprescription anti-lice (pediculicide) products are available. One type is Nix which contains permethrin. Follow label instructions for use and follow-up care. Use a special nit comb to help rid the hair of nits. Repeat the treatment in 7 to 10 days.
- Your health care provider may prescribe and give directions for using other anti-lice products, instructions on package.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

DIET

No special diet.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF:

- You, your sexual partner, or anyone in your household has symptoms of lice recurring after treatment.
- Signs of infection secondary to scratching.
- Reaction to medication.

DIAL-A-NURSE - 618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse provides students with medical self-care information when the Student Health Center is closed. Dial-A-Nurse is available 4:30p.m. - 10:30p.m. during the week and 2:30p.m. - 10:30p.m. on weekends when school is in session.

Student Health Center



WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC

This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.