

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Crabs and Scabies

What are Crabs and Scabies?

Crabs are lice that live on people, most often infesting the hairy part of the body. Lice live by feeding on human blood. They are small, but can be seen easily and diagnosed. Crabs (pubic lice) are related to head lice but are found primarily in pubic hair. They occasionally move and can be found in the hair of other areas, such as the beard, moustaches, eye lashes or under one's arms. Scabies is caused by mites that burrow under the skin to lay their eggs. Burrows are usually found between the fingers, around the genitals, on the wrists or buttocks, and under the arms.

What can infestations do to me?

The first sign of crabs is usually intense, persistent itching in the genital or rectal area. The crabs or the eggs may also be seen. Scabies' burrows are also itchy and usually worse at night.

Scratching the crabs or the scabies can increase the irritation, and may lead to a more severe infection caused by other germs.

How are they treated?

Crabs can be eradicated at home with preparations available from a pharmacist without a prescription. Scabies should be diagnosed by a physician or an STI clinic before being treated.

A thorough cleaning of your clothing is necessary. Dry-clean or spin wash and dry (hot setting) all clothing in contact with crabs or scabies. Also wash all bed linen used in the last 24 hours.

Your pharmacist can also recommend various sprays to disinfect clothing, bedding, furniture and other household items infested with crabs or scabies.

When can I have sex again?

When there are no more signs of the infestation (itching, burrows, eggs, crabs).

Could I have given the infestation to other people?

Yes, and not just to your sex partner(s). The entire family or others who have had close contact with an infested person should be inspected and undergo treatment if necessary.

Does the treatment always work?

Generally, yes. However the infestation may be stubborn and you may need to repeat treatment one week later.

Do not treat a third time. If the infestation persists call your doctor or STI clinic.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT****Environmental Health & Prevention Services**

160 Exmouth Street
Point Edward, Ontario N7T 7Z6
Telephone: 519 383-8331
Toll free: 1-800-667-1839
Fax: 519 383-7092
Email: chsd@county-lambton.on.ca
www.lambtonhealth.on.ca

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