

# Pubic Lice (“Crabs”) and Scabies

(Pubic lice caused by *Phthirus pubis*, the crab louse,  
and scabies caused by *Sarcoptes scabiei*, a mite)

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Severe itching
- Sometimes lice can be seen in hairy parts of body

## TRANSMISSION

Pubic lice and scabies are spread by:

- Sexual contact
- Close physical contact
- Infested towels, bedding and clothing

Transmission from toilet seats is unlikely.

## COMPLICATIONS

If left untreated:

- Can spread to sex partners
- Pubic lice can spread from pubic hair to other hairy areas
- Scabies can spread through a family

## PREVENTION

- Avoiding vaginal, oral or anal sex is the best way to prevent STDs.
- Limit the number of sex partners.
- Notify sex partners immediately if infested.
- Infested sex partners should be treated.
- Avoid sleeping in the same bed or sharing towels or clothes with someone who is infested.

## TESTING AND TREATMENT

- Get a test from a medical provider if infection is suspected.
- Can be killed using medication prescribed by a medical provider or, in the case of pubic lice, over-the-counter products.
- Partners should be treated at same time.
- Wash all clothes and bedding in hot water.
- Vacuum furniture.

NOTE: A person can re-acquire pubic lice or scabies after treatment.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Minnesota Department of Health  
STD and HIV Section  
(651) 201-5414  
[www.health.state.mn.us/std](http://www.health.state.mn.us/std)

Minnesota Family Planning and STD Hotline  
1-800-783-2287 Voice/TTY; (651) 645-9360 (Metro)  
[www.sexualhealthmn.org](http://www.sexualhealthmn.org)

American Social Health Association (ASHA)  
[www.ashastd.org](http://www.ashastd.org)

CDC National STD and AIDS Hotlines  
1-800-CDC-INFO; 1-888-232-6348 TTY  
[www.cdc.gov/std](http://www.cdc.gov/std)