



Health Services

# University of Oklahoma StudentAffairs

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method of transmission is direct contact with an infested genital area (usually through sexual activity); however it can occasionally be spread by indirect contact with infected towels, sheets, clothing, etc.

### What are Head Lice?

Head lice are parasitic insects that are found on the human scalp behind the ears and near the neckline. Head lice most commonly affect preschool and elementary-age children (3-10 years) and those who come in close contact with them (e.g., parents, siblings). The main method of transmission is direct contact with an infected person. In addition, indirect contact with infected objects such as combs, brushes, hats, clothing, towels, etc. also contribute to the spread of this infestation.

### What are the Signs and Symptoms of Lice?

It may take 2-3 weeks to develop the most common symptom of intense itching. Visible signs of lice can also be observed through careful, physical examination of the body, head, articles of clothing, bedding, etc. Secondary bacterial infections may also occur due to open sores from scratching. Some other common symptoms associated with head lice in particular include a tickling/moving feeling of something in the hair and an increase in irritability.

Pubic lice do not spread disease; however body lice are capable of spreading certain diseases (typhus, relapsing fever, trench fever) that can lead to life-threatening conditions.

### What is the Treatment for Lice ?

After a lice infestation is diagnosed by a health care provider, medicated shampoo is often prescribed. It is also recommended that all clothing, towels, combs, brushes, bedding, etc. be sterilized to prevent future outbreaks. Removal of nits (or egg sacs) is important to eradicate the infestation of head and pubic lice. This is most easily accomplished with specialized combs called nit combs.

### References

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# SKINDisorders

Parasitic  
Infections

Meeting the health needs of OU students, faculty, staff, and dependents



## Health Services

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### Parasitic Infections

#### What is Scabies?

Scabies is a parasitic infection of the skin caused by tiny mites, called *Sarcoptes scabiei*, that burrow into human skin. This infection is contagious and is almost always transmitted by close personal contact with an infected individual. Although no person is immune to scabies, it is more common in people with poor hygiene and those who live in crowded conditions.

Although direct contact (skin-to-skin) is the most common method of transmission, scabies can also be spread through indirect contact (clothes, towels, or bedding) since the mites can live for 24 hours or more outside of a human host. Scabies can **not** be spread from humans to pets or vice versa.

#### What are the Signs and Symptoms of Scabies?

It may take several weeks after infestation for symptoms to appear. The earliest and most common symptom is itching, which is often severe and may get worse at night. Other symptoms may include red bumps, tiny bites, pimples, or sores.

Mites thrive in a warm environment, so infestation most commonly occurs in the skin folds of the following body parts:

- Fingers and toes
- Elbows
- Knees
- Penis
- Breast
- Shoulder blades

**Note:** One form of scabies is called crusted (Norwegian) scabies. Symptoms of this parasitic infection are severe and highly contagious and include crusty and scabby skin.

#### Who is Most at Risk?

Anyone can become infected with scabies; however it is more common in people who have close physical contact with others including:

- Children
- Parents

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- Sexually active individuals
- Elderly living in nursing facilities

In addition, the elderly and individuals with weakened immune systems are most at risk for Norwegian Scabies.

#### What is the Treatment for Scabies?

After scabies is diagnosed, usually by a physical examination and/or a skin scraping procedure, a topical lotion may be prescribed. In most cases, scabies can be cured with two applications of a medicated lotion and the sterilization of all clothes, bedding, towels, etc. that may have been infected. Reoccurrences can be prevented with effective treatment and adherence to instructions.

If treatment is effective no new burrows or rashes should appear 24-48 hours after application; however itching may continue for another 2-3 weeks.

#### What are Lice (Pediculosis)?

Lice are tiny parasitic insects that feed off human blood. They are commonly found on the skin where they lay their eggs and deposit fecal matter; however infestation can also occur in clothing and other material. There are three types of lice including body lice (pediculosis corporis), pubic lice (pediculosis pubis), and head lice (pediculosis capitis).

#### What are Body Lice?

Body lice are tiny, grayish-white parasites that attach to the body and feed on human blood. Body lice infestation can be spread by direct (skin-to-skin) or indirect (towels, clothing, bedding, etc.) contact. Anyone can become infested with body lice; however infestation is most common among transient populations who do not have access to clean clothes or baths and among people living in crowded, unsanitary conditions.

#### What are Pubic Lice?

Pubic lice usually live in the pubic region; however they can also be found in the hair on the armpits, face, and eyelashes. Pubic lice are tiny crab-shaped insects and are sometimes referred to as "crabs". The most common