



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

LICE

What are lice?

Lice are tiny insects that live on the scalp, pubic area or other parts of the body.

How are lice spread?

Lice may be spread through the following ways:

- Close contact with an infected person.
- Lice may live on clothing, carpeting and bedding.

What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Intense itching
- Small, red bumps on the head, neck and shoulders
- Irritability
- Eggs (nits) on the hair shaft

How are lice diagnosed?

Lice can be diagnosed by looking closely at the head or surface of the body, including the groin area.

What is the treatment for lice?

Lotions and shampoos are available to treat lice. Most contain permethrin and are available at the store without a prescription. If these products do not work, your doctor may give you a prescription for another treatment. Read the labels carefully and use the treatment as directed. Do not use more frequently than recommended. All bedding and linens should be washed in hot water. Vacuum carpet and furniture thoroughly.

How can I prevent lice?

Avoid close contact with an infected person. Do not share hair brushes or combs. Do not share hats, scarves or hair ribbons. Do not share bedding or towels with someone who has lice.

For more information on lice:

Ottawa County Health Department
www.miOttawa.org
Medline Plus/National Institutes of Health
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000840.htm