

SKIN AND SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS

Pubic Lice

Pediculosis pubis (pubic lice) is often transmitted through sexual intercourse and/or close and intimate contact.

Consideration should be given to the possibility that the patient may be at risk of other genital infections. Carry out appropriate screening or refer to Integrated Sexual Health Services.

Provide the following advice:

- Give clear and accurate written information on how to apply the treatment. Patient information is available from NHS A-Z "[Pubic lice](#)".
- Advise patients to notify recent partners where suitable, so they can be checked.
- Ensure that the person is aware that treatment may fail if treatment instructions are not closely followed.
- Explain that itching may persist for several days or weeks after treatment.
- Decontaminate clothes and bed linen by washing items in hot water ($\geq 50^{\circ}\text{C}$), dry cleaning or placing them in a sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks to kill the lice — mattresses should be vacuumed.
- Avoid close body contact, sexual contact and sharing of clothes, bedding and personal hygiene products until they (and their partner[s]) have successfully completed treatment.
- Lice eggs (nits) should be removed with a fine-tooth 'nit' comb.
- Refer to (or discuss with) a GUM specialist if:
 - Treatment fails despite the use of an alternative regimen.
 - There is uncertainty about treatment.
 - The clinical picture is atypical or there is doubt about the diagnosis.

Treatment:

Treatment options are available to buy over the counter.

Alcohol lotions are not recommended.

A second treatment is needed after 7 days to kill lice emerging from surviving eggs.

Medication ¹	Dosage	Duration	Comments
<i>Adults and children aged 6 months and over:</i>			
Malathion 0.5% aqueous lotion (e.g. generic or Derbac-M®) Available to buy OTC	Apply to whole body (pay particular attention to all hairy areas including beards and moustaches; avoid any other areas above the neck), allow to dry naturally. Wash off after 12 hours or after leaving overnight.	Repeat after 7 days	Not licensed for use in children under 6 months except under medical supervision.
<i>Adults over 18yrs only:</i>			
Permethrin 5% dermal cream (e.g. generic or Lyclear®) Available to buy OTC	Apply to whole body, allow to dry naturally. Wash off after 12 hours or after leaving overnight.	Repeat after 7 days	Not licensed for treatment of crab lice in children under 18 years. Larger patients may require up to two 30-g packs for adequate treatment.
¹ See BNF for appropriate use and dosing in specific populations, e.g., hepatic, or renal impairment, pregnancy and breastfeeding.			

Infestation of eyelashes can also occur; lice on eyelashes should be treated with an inert occlusive ophthalmic ointment (such as simple eye ointment BP) or paraffin eye ointment, twice a day for 8–10 days.

Advise the person to self-examine for the presence of live lice (not nits) one week after completion of treatment to ensure that all lice have been killed. A different insecticide should be used if a course of treatment fails.

Pubic Lice V3.0. Part of the **Antimicrobial Prescribing Guidelines for Primary Care**.

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Accessibility checked. Contains tables which may not be accessible to screen readers.