

Body Lice (Pediculosis Corporis)

Body lice, or *Pediculosis corporis*, are lice that live on the body, and in the clothing or bedding of infested individuals.

Transmission

Anyone can be infected with body lice. In the United States, body lice tend to occur in people who do not have access to regular (at least weekly) bathing and changes of clean clothes. Infestation is unlikely to persist on anyone who bathes regularly and who regularly has access to freshly laundered clothing and bedding. Body lice are spread by adult lice, not eggs, via:

- **Person to person.** Direct contact with an infected person
- **Environment to person.** Indirectly by sharing clothing, beds, bedding, or towels.

It takes one to two weeks for eggs to hatch. Lice can reproduce nine to 19 days after hatching. A person may spread body lice until all adult lice and eggs have been killed or removed. A past infection does not make you immune.

Risk Factors:

- Persons experiencing homelessness
- Persons residing in shelters
- Transient populations
- Individuals with no access to changes of clothes, bathing, or laundering

Symptoms

Symptoms include:

- **Intense itching** particularly at night
- **Rash** caused by an allergic reaction to the bites
- **Sores** caused by continuous scratching

Diagnosis

Identification of eggs and lice with the naked eye is possible; however, the use of a hand lens or microscope may help to confirm the identification. Contact a health care provider if you are unsure about a body lice infestation.

Prevention

- **Bathe regularly.**
- **Wear clean clothes** changing them at least once a week.
- **Machine wash and dry infested clothing and bedding** using hot water (at least 130°F) and the high heat drying cycle. Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned OR sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
- **Do not share personal items** such as clothing, beds, bedding, and towels used by an infested person.
- **Fumigation or dusting with chemical insecticides** may be necessary.

Treatment

Treatment consists of:

- **Improving personal hygiene**
- **Cleaning clothes and bedding**
- **Lice Shampoo** (pediculicide) applied to the body
 - This medication should be applied exactly as directed on the bottle or by your health care provider.

For more information about the treatment of body lice, contact your health care provider or visit [CDC - Lice - Body Lice](#).

Exclusion Guidance

Individuals with body lice should not be excluded from work, school, or child care unless the [general exclusions apply](#).

For additional information about body lice, contact North Dakota Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health at 800.472.2180.

Resources:

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, July 8). Lice - Body Lice. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 6th, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/body/index.html>.
2. Kimberlin, D. W., Barnett, E. D., Lynfield, R., Sawyer, M. H. (2021) Red Book: 2021- Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 31st ed. American Academy of Pediatrics. [Management and Prevention of Infectious Diseases; [Pages 122-133; 571-572].
3. J. Jones, F. Meslin, and H. V. Nielsen, (2022, May 11). Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 21st Edition. American Public Health Association. [Pediculosis and Phthiriasis] [page 446-448].

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