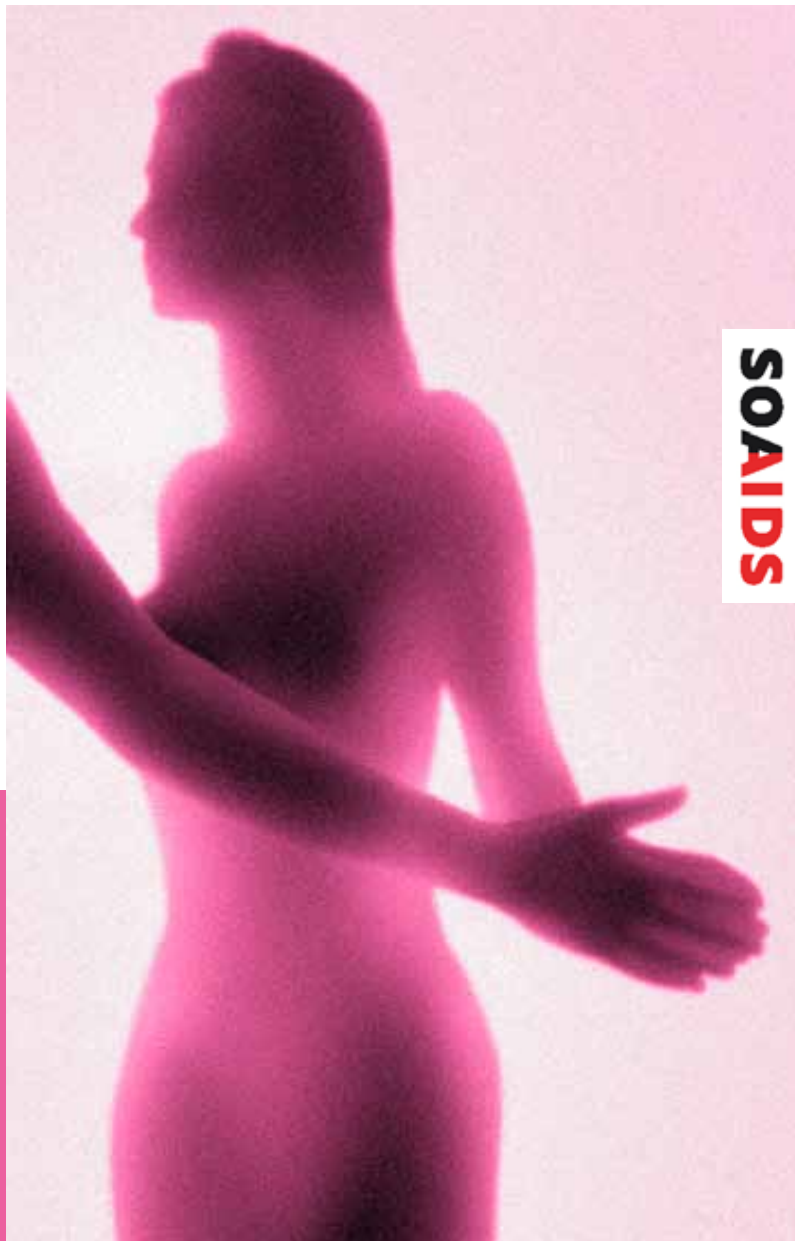


## Further information

Further information about STIs is available on the Soa Aids Nederland (STI AIDS Netherlands) website. Soa Aids Nederland is a centre of expertise for HIV infection and other STIs. The [www.soa aids.nl](http://www.soa aids.nl) website gives detailed information on HIV and other STIs. Young people can visit the Dutch information site [www.sense.info](http://www.sense.info).

# Pubic lice



**SOAIDS**

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## For answers to your questions on STIs, call the AIDS STI Infoline

0900-204 204 0 (10 cents per minute)  
Mon - Fri 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
Thurs and Fri 2 - 8 p.m.  
or send an e-mail to: [infolijn@soa aids.nl](mailto:infolijn@soa aids.nl)

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Pubic lice (also known as “crab lice” or “crabs”) are annoying but harmless parasites that are usually passed on by close body contact. You can also catch them by sharing infected clothing, bedding or towels. The lice feed on human blood and may be found in any hair on the body except in hair on the head (those are head lice). It’s easy to find out whether you have pubic lice: see if you can spot small dots on your pubic hair. These are lice eggs, called nits. The lice themselves are also easy to spot. They often move around in the pubic hair and look like small crabs (1-3 mm). Pubic lice are easy to treat with special insecticides.

## Symptoms

About two weeks after you have come into contact with the pubic lice or their eggs, you will start to have constant itching. This is an allergic reaction to the lice bites. Usually the insects are found on hair around the genitals or the anus, but sometimes they live in other body hair and even in eyelashes or eyebrows. The lice feed on human blood, so they will leave marks of red or brown droppings in underwear. The lice bites will cause greyish-blue marks on your skin.

## Possible complications

Scratching can make the skin red and irritated. Broken skin may then lead to a skin infection.

## Treatment

Washing with water and ordinary soap or shampoo will not get rid of pubic lice. A doctor, chemist or pharmacist will advise you on an effective insecticide. You don’t need a prescription for this. Apply the cream or lotion to pubic hair, the hair on the inside of your thighs, and any other hair that is affected, with the exception of eyelashes. Twelve hours later, all the lice and nits are dead. If you had been badly infected by the lice, it is advisable to repeat the treatment after a week.

Lice and nits in eyelashes are treated by applying Vaseline twice a day. This treatment takes ten days. An alternative is to remove the lice one by one with tweezers and the nits with your fingernails. Clothing and bedding have to be washed (at 60°C) or taken to the dry cleaners. To prevent re-infection, partners should be treated too. Even if they don’t have any symptoms.

If you have caught pubic lice from sexual contact, it is advisable to be tested for other STIs.

## Warning partners

It is important that all your sexual partners from the past two months are informed so that they can be treated too.