PEDICULOSIS (LICE)

Cause/Epidemiology

Head lice are caused by *Pediculosis humanus capitis*.  
Body lice is caused by *Pediculosis humanus*  
Crab lice are caused by *Phthirus pubis*.

Lice are communicable as long as lice or eggs remain alive on the infested person or clothing.

Head and body lice live for seven – ten days off a host. Lice that fall off the head rarely survive longer than 36 hours, move poorly off the head, are usually damaged, and therefore are unable to re-infest another person.

Crab lice live only two days off a host.

Clinical Presentation

Pediculosis is an infestation of lice of the hairy parts of the body or clothing with the eggs, larvae or adults. The crawling stages of this insect feed on human blood, which can result in severe itching.

Head lice are usually located on the scalp.

Crab lice are located in the pubic area and may also infect facial hair (including eyelashes in cases of heavy infestation), axillae and body surfaces.

Body lice are in seams of clothing. Body lice travel to the skin to feed and return back to the clothing.

Any person may become infested under suitable conditions or exposure. Pediculosis is easily transmitted from person-to-person during direct contact.

Head lice infestations are frequently found in school settings or institutions.

Crab lice infestations can be found among sexually active individuals.

Body lice infestation can be found in people living in crowded, unsanitary conditions where clothing is infrequently changed or laundered.

Repeated infestations may result in dermal hypersensitivity.