



BODY LICE

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Body lice (*Pediculus humanus var. humanus*) is the cause of pediculosis corporis. The parasite is a small, flat wingless insect. Similar parasites cause **head** and **pubic lice**. The insects actually live on clothing, where they lay their eggs in the seams and then travel to the skin for a blood meal. The infection can cause red spots and bumps on the back, neck, shoulders, and waistline with severe itching. The infestation is most commonly associated with crowded and unsanitary living conditions. The insects can transmit a variety of disease including trench fever, relapsing fever, and epidemic typhus. These diseases are spread by the parasite feces, which are scratched into the skin by the infected person. Thus, the spread of disease is not by the bite of the parasite.

In contrast to scabies the hand and feet are usually spared. However, many patients may be infected with any combination or all of the following: lice, scabies and/or fleas. There are a variety of ways to treat the infection, most importantly cleaning or disposing of infected clothing and bedding. Lice may live in clothing for up to 10 days without a blood meal. Clothing placed in a drier for at least thirty minutes near 149 degrees (F) will disinfect the clothing. Ironing the clothing may also be helpful. Topical (Permethrin cream) and Oral (**Ivermectin**) medications are available. Malathion powder/Permethrin spray can be applied to clothing for treatment and prevention of re-infestation. Re-infection is common despite successful therapy.

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