

Other Parasites of Human Skin (Lice, Mites, Ticks)

Two Pages

LICE: Lice are flat-bodied, wingless insects that feed exclusively on blood. They are easy to see, including the tiny eggs. They cause intensive itching to affected areas. There are three types found on humans: head louse, body louse, and pubic louse (or crab louse). Only the body louse is known to transmit disease.



Body lice live and lay eggs on clothing and only move to the skin to feed. They are spread most commonly by close person-to-person contact under conditions of crowding and poor hygiene. Body lice are known to transmit epidemic typhus, trench fever and epidemic relapsing fever. Symptoms include a rash and intense itching. Improved hygiene and access to regular changes of clothes is the recommended treatment. It is not necessary to treat premises with insecticides.



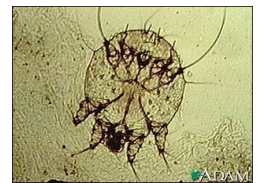
Head Lice are commonly found in preschoolers and elementary school aged children. They are transmitted from one person to another by direct contact, head-to-head. They do not live anywhere but the hair. They are not known to transmit disease. Persons with an active infestation should be treated. We recommend viewing the information from the Centers for Disease Control. You can view it on the web, www.cdc.gov/lice/head/treatment. It is not necessary to treat premises with insecticides.



Public Lice (crab lice) are small six-legged creatures that infect the pubic hair area and lay eggs. They can also be found in the armpit hair and eyebrows. They are primarily transmitted through sexual activity, but rarely through toilet seats, sheets and blankets. Consult a doctor or a pharmacist for proper medication. It is not necessary to treat premises with insecticides.

MITES: Mites are among the most diverse and successful of all invertebrate groups. There are over 45,000 known species and scientists think we have found 5%. Mites cause several forms of allergic diseases, including hay fever, asthma and eczema. They are usually found in warm and humid locations, including beds. It is thought that inhalation of mites during sleep exposes the human body to some antigens which eventually induce hypersensitivity reaction. Certain mites migrate from birds, rodents, and food materials to attack or annoy humans.

Scabies (Itch Mite) These mites burrow into the skin and spend their entire life cycle in and on the skin. Lesions caused by scabies tend to be concentrated on the web spaces of the hands and feet and in axillary and genital areas. They cause intense itching. They can spread rapidly under crowded conditions where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact. The scabies that infest people do not infest pets. A different kind of scabies mite infests pets (called mange). Several lotions are available to treat scabies. Consult a physician or a pharmacist for proper use.



Bird Mites are usually encountered in a home or business when they migrate from birds nests in eaves, rafters or gutters. They prefer to feed on the fledgling birds in the nest, but when the young leave the nest the mites will migrate to other areas in search of a blood meal. Sometimes infestation of buildings occurs when nests are disrupted or destroyed. Infestations may require a professional treatment of the premises.



16aOtherParasites(mites,ticks,lice)



Fig. 7. Tropical rat mite.

Rodent Mites are similar to bird mites only they are migrating into your house or business from rodent nests instead of bird nests. The real solution lies in eliminating the rodents or birds (and their nests). These mites can live for days off its hosts and will leave the dead rodent hosts seeking alternative food sources, including humans. They will congregate around heat sources, such as hot water pipes and stoves.



House Dust Mites are not visible to the naked eye. They are now recognized as the real cause of “dust allergy.” They are a common cause of asthma and allergic symptoms worldwide. These mites feed on organic material such as cast off human skin. They are a scavenger that feeds on cast off human skin, but do not bite humans. It is believed that over half the homes in our country are infested with dust mites. (See [16bDustMites](#) for further information)

TICKS: Ticks are the leading carrier of diseases to humans in the United States, second only to mosquitoes worldwide. It is not the bite, but the toxins or organisms in the tick’s saliva transmitted through the bite that cause the disease. They are responsible for carrying Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Lyme disease and others. Ticks are arachnids, like spiders, mites and scorpions. They have three pair of legs and one pair of antennae. When sucking blood they feed slowly and may go unnoticed for a long time. They wait for host animals from the tips of grasses and shrubs. When brushed by a moving animal or person they quickly let go of the vegetation and climb on the host.



American Dog Ticks

They will feed on raccoons as well as dogs. It can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. The Deer Tick feeds primarily on deer and is found in wooded areas along trails. It can transmit Lyme disease to humans. Researchers at the University of California at Berkley found that sitting on a log in Northern California for only 5 minutes gave you a 30% change of getting a tick on you.

Ticks are not usually a problem inside buildings requiring pest control treatments. The exception is the Brown Dog Tick (also called the kennel tick). Infested dogs may bring ticks inside. The Brown Dog Tick is not an important carrier of human disease.

Tick prevention includes wearing protective clothing in the woods, applying insect repellent and walking in the center of trails where you don’t brush against the shrubs



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