

FACT SHEET

Scabies

Scabies is a common contagious skin disease caused by a mite (insect) which burrows under the skin.

How Is It Spread?

Scabies is spread by close physical contact with another person who has scabies and their clothes. The mites can live off the skin for 4 days on clothes and other objects. An adult mite can live up to a month on a person.

What Are The Symptoms?

The most common symptom is a rash that itches intensely (especially at night or when the body gets warm) 2-6 weeks after being exposed to the disease but can start much sooner (within several days) if you have had scabies before. The rash can be anywhere on your body but is usually on the hands, wrists, chest, armpits, buttocks, genital area and waistline. Often the rash looks like tiny red bumps or red scratch lines under the skin.

How Is Scabies Treated?

- If you think you or your child has scabies contact your doctor. Scabies is diagnosed by using a microscope to look for the mite in skin scrapings.
- Creams or lotions from the drugstore that kill the mite can be applied to the skin. Follow the product instructions carefully.
- Itching can continue up to 2 weeks after treatment due to the mite's fecal pellets left behind in your skin. Your doctor can provide medication for this.
- All household members, close associates, school playmates and sexual contacts of a person with scabies should be examined and treated at the same time as the person with scabies.

What Can You Do?

- Contact your health care provider if you think you or your child has scabies. If you are diagnosed with scabies, every member of your household should be treated with medication.
- Apply the medicated lotion to a clean body from the neck down to the toes and leave overnight. After 12-14 hours take a shower or bath to remove the lotion. Put on clean clothes.
- All clothes, bedding and towels used in the last 4 days should be washed in hot water and dried in a hot dryer. Dry-clean non-washables. Clothing that cannot be laundered or dry-cleaned should be stored in a sealed plastic bag for 4 days.
- Do a second treatment in 7-10 days if you see new skin rashes or live mites.
- If your child has scabies, he or she should not return to the daycare or to school for 24 hours after the treatment has begun.

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