

Scabies Information Sheet

What is Scabies?

Scabies is a skin infestation by the human itch mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. The mite burrows into the upper layer of the skin where it lives and lays its eggs. Scabies is found worldwide and can affect all people. It can spread rapidly in crowded conditions, such as nursing homes, extended-care facilities, prisons and child care facilities.

How can you catch Scabies?

Scabies mites are usually spread by direct, extended skin-to-skin contact with a person with scabies. The contact must be prolonged; a quick handshake or hug usually will not spread the mites. Scabies can spread easily between sexual partners and household members.

What are the symptoms of Scabies?

People who have never had scabies may take up to 6 weeks to show symptoms after becoming infested with the mite, whereas as someone who has had scabies before will show symptoms much sooner. Symptoms can include:

- Intense itching, especially at night
- Skin burrows (small, crooked, and raised lines on surface of the skin)
- Pimple-like rash

How can you be treated for Scabies?

The products used to treat scabies are called scabicides. These products, usually ointments or lotions, are available with a doctor's prescription. It is important to follow the directions on how to apply them to avoid side effects of the medication.

How can you prevent Scabies?

Scabies is best prevented by avoiding direct skin-to-skin contact with a person diagnosed with scabies. Also avoid contact with their clothing and bedding. Other way to prevent scabies include:

- If a person within a household becomes infested, wash all bedding and clothing with hot water and dry thoroughly in a hot dryer. If this is not possible, contaminated items should be placed in a closed plastic bag for several days.
- If someone is infested, everyone else in their household should be treated at the same time to make sure the infestation does not spread outside of the home. Sexual partners of people infested with scabies should also be treated.
- An infested person's room should be thoroughly cleaned and vacuumed. Disinfecting sprays and pesticides are unnecessary and not recommended.