

Scabies

What is scabies?

Scabies is a contagious skin condition caused by tiny insects called mites. The mite is so small, it can only be seen with a magnifying glass.

What are the symptoms?

The mites burrow into the skin and cause a very itchy rash. The rash looks like curvy, white threads, tiny red bumps, or scratches and it can appear anywhere on the body. It usually appears between fingers or around wrists or elbows. On an infant, it can appear on the head, face, neck and body. It may take 2-6 weeks after being infected for the itching to occur. The only sure way to find out if you have scabies is to see your doctor.

How does it spread?

Scabies spreads from person to person by direct contact with infested skin or by contact with clothing/bedding or other personal items of someone else who had it. The mite does not jump. Mites do not survive for more than 3-4 days without skin contact.

What should I do if I have scabies?

- Contact your doctor if you think you have scabies.
- All household, close personal and sexual contacts within the last month should be treated with medication at the same time. Be sure to follow the instructions on the bottle. Itching may continue for weeks after successful treatment.
- Children under 2 years of age, pregnant and lactating women and persons with extensive dermatitis must seek their doctor's advice before treatment.
- Launder all bedding, towels and clothing with direct skin contact used in the previous 48 hours, using the hot cycle. Otherwise, dry clean articles or remove from body contact for at least 72 hours. Routine cleaning of the environment, especially bed linens, and vacuuming upholstered furniture will aid in eliminating mites.
- Fumigation of living areas is not necessary
- Exclude from school/day care/work for 24 hours after treatment.

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.

***For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext 8318.***

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