

SCABIES

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Scabies?

*Scabies is an infestation of the skin with the microscopic mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. These mites live in burrows dug into the top layers of the skin. The burrows contain the mites and their eggs. Scabies spreads rapidly under crowded conditions where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact between people, such as in hospitals, child care facilities, and nursing homes.*

How is it spread?

Scabies is spread by prolonged skin-to-skin contact with a person already infested with scabies. Infestation is easily spread to sexual partners and household members. Infestation may also occur by sharing clothing, towels and bedding.

How is it treated?

- Scabies is diagnosed by a physician, who can prescribe a lotion or cream containing a scabicide (prescription medication). There are specific scabicides available for pregnant women and infants under one year of age.
- Use the scabicide according to directions.
- Preventive treatment is recommended for household members; particularly those who have prolonged skin-to-skin contact.
- A second course of treatment may be necessary in 7-10 days if eggs survived the first treatment.

What else should be done?

Infested persons should be excluded from school or work for 24 hours after treatment. Bedding and clothing worn by the infested person should be washed in hot soapy water, and dried in a hot dryer. Freshly laundered clothing should be worn after each bath/shower and treatment.

How can we prevent Scabies?

- Avoid skin to skin contact with others until 24 hours after initial treatment.
- Notify school staff and parents of playmates, so that others can be alert for additional cases.

SYMPTOMS OF SCABIES

- Symptoms usually occur 4-6 weeks after exposure, but can occur up to 2 months after exposure.
- A red, itchy rash occurs at sites of burrows such as spaces between fingers, backs of hands, elbows, armpits, groin, breasts, umbilicus, penis, small of back and buttocks.
- Itching may continue for 2-3 weeks, even after effective treatment.

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