

SCABIES FACT SHEET

FOR PATIENTS, FAMILY, AND VISITORS

What is scabies?

Scabies is a fairly common infestation of the skin caused by a mite. Scabies mites burrow into the skin producing pimple-like irritations or burrows.

Who gets scabies?

Scabies infestations can affect people from all socioeconomic levels without regard to age, sex, race or standards of personal hygiene. Clusters of cases, or outbreaks, are occasionally seen in health care facilities, institutions, and child care centers.

How is scabies spread?

Scabies mites are transferred by any direct skin-to-skin contact. Indirect transfer from undergarments or bedding can occur only when these items have been in contact with an infected person immediately beforehand. Scabies can also be transmitted during sexual contact.

What are the symptoms of scabies?

The most prominent symptom of scabies is intense itching, particularly at night. The areas of the skin most effected by scabies include the webs and sides of the fingers, around the wrists, elbows and armpits, waist, thighs, genitalia, nipples, breasts, and lower buttocks.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms may appear two to six weeks after contact with the mite in people who have not previously been exposed to scabies infestations. People who have been previously infested with scabies mites may show symptoms within one to four days after re-exposure.

When and for how long is a person able to spread scabies?

A person is able to spread scabies until mites and eggs are destroyed by treatment.

What is the treatment for scabies?

The currently recommended treatment for scabies is 5% permethrin cream (Elimite) and is available through a physician's prescription. The lotion is applied to the whole body except the head and neck. When applied as directed, this product is approximately 90% effective after one application. All persons who have had skin contact with an infested person (including family members, roommates, direct care providers and sexual contacts) should also be treated.

How soon after treatment will symptoms resolve?

Itching may continue for 2 - 3 weeks, and does not mean that you are still infested. Health care providers may prescribe additional medication for the itching if it is severe. No new burrows or rashes should appear 24-48 hours after effective treatment.

What can be done to prevent the spread of scabies?

Avoid physical contact with infested individuals and their belongings, especially clothing and bedding. Health education on the biology of scabies, proper treatment and the need for early recognition, diagnosis, and treatment of infested individuals and contacts is extremely important.

For more information:

Contact your local health department.

Additional information is also available on the web at:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/scabies/factsht_scabies.htm