

Scabies

Fact Sheet



What is scabies?

Scabies is an infestation of the skin by small insects called mites.

What are the signs and symptoms of scabies?

Scabies results in a rash with severe itching at night. The itchy red bumps or blisters are found on skin folds between the fingers, toes, wrists, elbows, armpits, waistline, thighs, penis, abdomen, and lower buttocks. Children under 2 years of age are likely to have scabies on their head, neck, palms of the hands and soles of the feet. People who have never had scabies may not have signs or symptoms for 4-6 weeks after exposure. Those who have already had scabies may show symptoms in 1-4 days. Repeated exposures produce earlier symptoms. A person remains contagious until they are treated.

How is it spread?

Scabies is spread by person to person contact or through sharing of bedding, towels, and clothing.

How do you keep it from spreading?

Wash bedding and clothing used in the 3 days before the start of treatment in HOT water and in the HOT drying cycle. Items that cannot be washed should be sealed in a plastic bag for at least 4 days. All family members and close contacts should be notified and treated, including teammates on sports teams who are in close contact. Scabies affects all people from all socioeconomic levels without regard to sex, age, or personal hygiene. Itching is related to an allergic reaction to the mites and may go on for weeks after completing treatment. Contact a health professional if itching continues for several weeks after treatment.