

# Scabies

## What are Scabies?

Scabies is a skin disease caused by a tiny insect (mite). Mites burrow (get under) your skin and cause pimple-like irritations or a rash. Mites do not survive more than 48 to 72 hours when away from human skin.

## Who can Get Scabies?

Anyone can get scabies after close personal contact with an infested person. It is uncommon to get mites from dogs or from other animals.

People who have weakened immune systems may be at risk for a more severe form of scabies.

## How is Scabies Spread?

Scabies is spread:

- by direct skin-to-skin contact with an infested person that lasts a while (not quick touching like a hug)
- by contact with an infested person's clothing, towels and bedding
- during sexual contact.

## What are the Symptoms of Scabies?

- pimple-like irritations, burrows or rash (especially in the webbing between fingers; skin folds on the wrists, elbows, and knees; penis; breasts; or shoulder blades)
- intense itching all over the body, especially at night
- sores caused by scratching. Sores can become infected.

Symptoms begin 4 to 8 weeks after infestation for a person who has never had scabies. Symptoms appear within 1 to 4 days for a person who had scabies before.

## How is Scabies Found?

Your health care provider will look at your skin. They may take a skin scraping to look for mites, eggs or fecal matter.

## How is Scabies Treated?

Your health care provider will prescribe a lotion to treat scabies. Follow the package and health care provider directions. In general:

- Take a shower or bath before starting the treatment.
- For older children and adults: apply the lotion from your neck to your toes. For infants and young children: apply the cream or lotion from the head to the toes.
- Leave the lotion on for the recommended time.
- Take a shower or bath to wash off the lotion well.
- Put on clean clothing.
- Wash all clothing, bedding and towels used 2 days before treatment in hot water, and dry in a hot dryer.

You may need to repeat the lotion treatment in 7 to 10 days. Itching may last for 2 to 3 weeks after treatment and it does not mean you have a new infestation.

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Anyone who had close, long contact with an infested person (such as a sexual partner or family members) will also need to be treated at the same time as the infested person.

### **How Can Scabies be Prevented?**

Avoid skin-to-skin contact with anyone who has scabies or a rash.

### **Can You Get Scabies More Than Once?**

You can get scabies any time you have long skin-to-skin contact with an infested person.

### **How Long Should Infected People Stay Home From Work or School?**

Avoid work or school until 24 hours after treatment has begun.

**Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**