

## Scabies (*Sarcoptes scabiei*)

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### What is scabies?

Scabies is a contagious skin disease, caused by a tiny mite that tunnels into the upper layer of the skin where it lives and lays its eggs.

### What are the symptoms?

Itching is the most noticeable symptom (which is usually more severe at night), as well as a “pimple-like” itchy rash. The rash can also include tiny blisters and scales. The most common sites for the rash are the folds of skin between the fingers and toes, or around the wrists, elbows, knees, armpits or stomach. Scratching the rash can cause skin sores, which can become infected.

### How soon do symptoms occur?

People who have never had scabies before usually notice symptoms about 4-6 weeks after exposure. *It is important to remember that an infested person can spread scabies during this period, even if the person does not have symptoms.* People who have had scabies before develop symptoms sooner, often within 1-4 days. Having had scabies once does not protect you from getting scabies again, therefore; it is possible to be reinfested.

### How is it spread?

Scabies are transmitted by *direct, prolonged, skin-to-skin contact* with a person already infested with scabies. A quick handshake or hug will usually not spread scabies. Infestation is easily spread to sexual partners and household members. Scabies may also be spread by sharing clothing, towels, or bedding. Scabies can spread quickly in crowded situations where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact (such as hospitals, nursing homes, and child care centers). *People cannot catch scabies from animals.*

### How long can scabies mites live?

On a person, scabies mites can live for as long as 1-2 months. Off a person, scabies mites usually do not survive more than 48-72 hours. Scabies mites will die if exposed to a temperature of 122°F (50°C) for 10 minutes.

### How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor can check to see if your rash is due to scabies. Diagnosis is usually made based on the appearance and distribution of the rash and presence of tunnels, and/or by using a microscope to look for the mite in skin scrapings.

### Can it be treated?

Yes. Products used to treat scabies are called *scabicides* because they kill scabies mites; some also kill eggs. Scabicides to treat human scabies are available by prescription only. Follow your doctor's instructions for treatment, as well as those contained in the box or printed on the label. All household members and close contacts of a person with scabies should be treated at the same time as the person with scabies.

### How soon after treatment will I feel better?

Itching may continue for up to 1 to 2 weeks after treatment; it does not mean that the treatment did not work or that you have scabies again. However, retreatment may be necessary if itching continues more than 2-4 weeks after treatment or if new burrows or rash continue to appear.

### How can spread be prevented or stopped?

By avoiding direct skin-to-skin contact with an infested person or with their personal items (clothing, towels, and brushes) or bedding. Clothing and bed linen worn or used in the 48 hours before treatment should be washed and dried on hot cycles or professionally dry cleaned.

### For further information visit:

- [www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies)