



Scabies: Questions and Answers 2013

What is scabies?

Scabies is a common skin condition caused by tiny mites. Scabies is sometimes called “the itch.” Anyone can get scabies, and although it is unpleasant it does not cause disease.

How is it spread?

Scabies is usually spread by direct and skin to skin contact with someone who already has it. Scabies is sometimes spread by sharing clothing, towels or a bed. A quick handshake or hug usually will not spread scabies.

What are the signs of scabies?

Signs of scabies begin 2-6 weeks after contact, if you have never had scabies before. If you have had scabies before, signs appear in 1-4 days after contact. Scabies usually causes a pimple like rash and severe itching, especially at night. You may see tiny grey, white lines on the skin’s surface. These signs of scabies are often found on the wrists, elbows, armpits, between fingers, nipples, penis, waist, belt line and buttocks.

In infants and very young children these signs can often be found on the head, face, neck, palms and soles of the feet.

How do I know for sure it is scabies?

Only your doctor or nurse practitioner can say for sure if you or your child has scabies. Itching and skin rashes can have many other causes.

How can scabies be prevented?

Scabies is prevented by avoiding direct skin-to-skin contact with someone who has scabies and by not sharing clothing, towels or a bed with someone who has scabies.

How is scabies treated?

- After seeing your doctor or nurse practitioner, follow the directions for the lotion or cream recommended.
- Treat all family members who have had contact with the affected person.
- If you have scabs or crusts from scratching, have a bath or shower first to soften them.
- Wait 15 minutes until the skin is dry and cool before applying the lotion.
- Cover your entire body with the lotion.
- Once the product has absorbed and your skin feels dry, dress in clean clothes.
- Leave the lotion on for the recommended time.
- Once time is up, take a bath or shower, wash well, and put on clean clothes.
- Treat all members of the household at the same time.
- The itching may continue for 2-4 weeks after treatment. If the itching continues for longer than this, or the rash does not go away, see your doctor.
- There is other medication available to help relieve the itching. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Affected people may return to work or school the day after the start of treatment.

What do I do around my house?

Scabies mites do not live for more than 2-3 days off human skin. Wash bedding, clothes, and towels in hot water and use the dryer on the hot cycle. For items that cannot be washed, seal them in a bag for at least 72 hours. There is no need to spray the home.

For additional information on Scabies, contact your family doctor or your Community Health Nurse.

