



Scabies Fact Sheet

What is scabies?

Scabies is a skin disease caused by an almost invisible bug called a mite. Scabies mites burrow under the skin, producing pimple-like bumps.

Who gets scabies?

Anyone can get scabies. Scabies most commonly occurs in nursing homes, institutions and child care centers.

How is scabies spread?

Scabies mites spread by direct skin-to-skin contact. Transfer of scabies from undergarments or bedclothes can happen only if these are reused immediately after an infected person. Scabies can also be spread during sexual contact. The mites can survive only 3 days off the body and cannot jump or fly.

What are the symptoms of scabies?

The major symptom of scabies is intense itching, particularly at night. In adults, the areas of the skin most affected by scabies include the webs and sides of the fingers, wrists, elbows, armpits, waist, genitals, breasts and lower buttocks. In children, the feet and toes are also commonly affected.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms will appear in 2 to 6 weeks in people who have never had scabies. People who have had scabies before may show symptoms within 1 to 4 days.

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How long is a person able to spread scabies?

A person can spread scabies until mites and eggs are destroyed by treatment.

What is the treatment for scabies?

Skin lotions are available from a doctor for the treatment of scabies. The lotions are applied to the whole body except the head and neck. Sometimes itching may continue for days after treatment. In a few persons, treatment with lotion for a second time 7 to 10 days later may be needed. Clothes and bedding should be washed in hot water after each treatment.

What can be done to stop the spread of scabies?

Avoid physical contact with people who have scabies and do not share their belongings, especially clothing and bedding. Early proper treatment of infested persons is extremely important to stop the spread of scabies.

Should people with scabies attend school or a daycare center?

People may return to school or a daycare center after receiving treatment.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health Department
(405) 425-4437*

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