



# Fact Sheet: Scabies

## What is Scabies?

It is a highly contagious skin irritation caused by a very tiny insect called the human scabies mite. The mite burrows into the outer layer of skin to lay eggs. The mites are about the size of a dot at the end of a sentence, and are grayish or almost transparent in color. Mites do not survive more than 3-4 days without skin contact.

## What are the symptoms?

- Itching at the burrow site, may be worse at night.
- Tiny red dots on the skin following the burrow track (gray/silver lines).
- May not appear until 2-6 weeks after exposure. People who have had scabies before show more symptoms much sooner.
- Sores on body are caused by scratching.

Although the rash can vary in location and severity, it commonly shows up around the webs of the fingers or toes and around the waist and armpits. Other areas to check are the inner portions of the elbows and wrists, and in the creases of the groin area. It typically does not affect the face or scalp.

## How is it spread?

Scabies is most commonly found in crowded groups of people and is transmitted through close personal contact. Clothing and bedding of infected individuals may also play a role in spreading the infection. Due to the high frequency of infections on the hands, shaking hands or holding hands such as in children's games can spread scabies. Any intimate skin-to-skin contact can spread scabies.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or 257-3612.*

Visit our website at: [www.gchd.us](http://www.gchd.us) or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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## How is the disease treated?

For a positive diagnosis and treatment of scabies see your health care provider. Scabies can be cured in 24-48 hours with medication. However, the itching may last for 2-3 weeks.

- Apply the medication thoroughly from the neck down.
- Leave lotion on for the recommended amount of time. *(Included in package insert)*
- Bathe to remove the medication.
- Wash all clothing and bedding in hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Items such as stuffed animals and blankets that cannot be washed can be placed in an airtight bag for 2 weeks, or can be placed in a dryer on high for at least 1 hour.
- Vacuum all chairs and carpets where the infected individual has spent time.
- There is no immunity to scabies. If signs of an infection show up again, you need to return to your doctor for additional treatment.
- Consider treating all household members at the same time.

## How is it prevented?

- Prevention of new cases is based on early detection, diagnosis and treatment of scabies.
- Wash your hands frequently through out the day and teach your children to do the same.