

## Scabies Fact Sheet

### What is scabies?

Scabies is a fairly common disease of the skin caused by a microscopic mite. Scabies mites burrow into the skin, producing pimple-like irritations or linear burrows. Occasionally, secondary bacterial infections may occur from scratching.

### Who gets scabies?

Scabies infestations can affect people from all socio-economic levels without regard to race, sex, age, or standards of personal hygiene. Clusters of cases of outbreaks are occasionally seen in health care facilities, institutions, and child care centers.

### How is scabies spread?

Scabies mites are transferred by direct skin-to-skin contact. Indirect transfer through clothing or bedding can occur only if these items have been contaminated by infested people immediately before handling these items. Scabies can also be transmitted during sexual contact. Scabies from other animals cannot infest humans!

### How is scabies diagnosed?

Definitive diagnosis involves demonstrating the presence of the mite by taking skin scrapings, the microscopically examining the specimens obtained. The "ink prep" method may also be used to demonstrate burrows.

### What are the symptoms of scabies?

The most prominent symptom of scabies is intense itching, particularly at night. The areas of the skin most often affected by scabies include the webs and sides of the fingers, around the wrists, elbows and armpits, waist, thighs, genitalia, nipples, breasts, and lower buttocks.

### How do symptoms occur?

After exposure, symptoms will usually appear in 2-6 weeks in people who have not previously been exposed to scabies infestations. People who have had previous infestation with scabies mites may show symptoms within 2-4 days after re-exposure.

### When and for how long can a person spread scabies?

A person is able to spread scabies until mites and eggs are killed by treatment. **Individuals with scabies should not attend school, day care, or work until the day after treatment is initiated.** The mites are present and may spread to another individual before the infected person shows symptoms. The treatment is obtained by prescription.