

**What is scabies?**

Scabies is an infestation of the skin by a mite called *Sarcoptes scabiei*. The infestation leads to a skin rash of the affected area and intense itching. Severe infestations are called Norwegian scabies and occur rarely.

Who is at risk for scabies?

All people can get scabies. Older people and people with compromised immune systems are more likely to develop Norwegian scabies.

What are the symptoms of scabies?

Symptoms of scabies include an itchy rash. Itching may become more severe at night. Certain areas of the body favored by the mites include the finger webs, wrists, elbows, armpits, belt line and genitals. In women, nipples, lower abdomen and lower buttocks may also be involved.

How soon do symptoms appear?

For people who have never had scabies, it may take up to six weeks to develop symptoms. For people with previous scabies infestations, symptoms will develop two to four days after infestation.

How is scabies spread?

Scabies is spread by direct person-to-person contact with someone who has scabies. Transmission from inanimate objects (chairs, combs, countertops, etc.; exceptions include bedding and clothing worn next to the skin) is rare except with Norwegian scabies.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

Spread of the disease can happen as long as the person remains infested with the mites and is not treated.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No. Repeated infestations can occur. People who get repeated infestations will notice symptoms within just a couple of days.

How is a person diagnosed?

Consult a health-care professional. A skin scraping can be evaluated for the presence of the mite or eggs. Burrows in the skin also may be visible.

What is the treatment?

People with scabies are treated with anti-scabies lotions applied to the skin. In general, one treatment is enough to prevent further spread. However, two treatments sometimes are needed. Follow all instructions carefully.

Untreated, a person with scabies will continue to spread scabies to other people. The continued scratching of the skin can lead to secondary bacterial infections that may be difficult to treat and may lead to other complications.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have scabies?

Children with scabies should be excluded from day care until after treatment has been completed. Health-care workers should be treated and check with their infection control practitioner before returning to work. Those that have jobs requiring frequent direct contact with people can return to work after completing treatment.

What can be done to prevent the spread of scabies?

People who develop itching rashes should consult with their health-care provider. Those who are diagnosed with scabies should be treated immediately. Close contacts of people with scabies also should be treated. Close contacts include people who live in the same house, day-care contacts and others who have had direct skin-to-skin contact with someone who has scabies.

Bedding and clothing worn next to the skin during the three days before therapy is started should be laundered in a washer with hot water and dried on high heat. Mites do not survive in the environment for more than three days.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Outbreaks of this condition in any institution is a reportable condition. As mandated by North Dakota law, any incidence of this disease shall be reported to the North Dakota Department of Health.

Resource: American Academy of Pediatrics. Scabies. In: Pickering LK, ed. *Red Book: 2006 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 27th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2006:[584-587]

