

## FACT SHEET

### Scabies

**Cause:** Scabies is an infestation of the skin with the tiny mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. Scabies can infest anyone, anywhere around the world regardless of race or status. It spreads rapidly in crowded conditions having skin-to-skin contact among people, as in hospitals, institutions, child-care facilities, and nursing homes.

**Symptoms:** Pimple-like irritations, burrows or rash of the skin, especially the webbing between the fingers; the skin folds on the wrist, elbow, or knee; the penis, the breast, or shoulder blades.

- At night itching becomes more intense, and happens over most of the body.
- Scratching these areas will often cause sores on the body which can result in a bacterial infection.

**Spread:** Prolonged, direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person with scabies. A quick handshake or hug will usually not spread infestation. Infection can happen with sharing clothing, towels, and bedding. Infection also easily spreads to sexual partners and household members.

**Incubation:** First time infestation with scabies takes 4-6 weeks for symptoms to begin. For those individuals with previous infestation with scabies, symptoms show up within several days. There is no way to become immune to scabies.

**Precautions:** **Contact Precautions** until 24 hours after initiation of effective therapy

**Diagnosis and Treatment:** Diagnosis is most commonly made by looking at the burrows or rash. A skin scraping may be taken to look for mites, eggs, or mite fecal matter to confirm the diagnosis. If a skin scraping or biopsy is taken and returns negative, it is possible that you may still be infested. Typically, there are fewer than 10 mites on the entire body of an infested person; this makes it easy for an infestation to be missed.

Several lotions are available to treat scabies. Always follow the directions provided by the physician or the directions on the package insert. Apply lotion to a clean body from the neck down to the toes and left overnight (8 hours). After 8 hours, take a bath or shower to wash

off the lotion. Put on clean clothes. All clothes, bedding, and towels used by the infested person 2 days before treatment should be washed in hot water; dry in a hot dryer. A second treatment of the body with the same lotion may be necessary 7-10 days later. Pregnant women and children are often treated with milder scabies medications.

Anyone who is diagnosed with scabies, as well as his or her sexual partners and persons who have close, prolonged contact to the infested person should also be treated. If your health care provider has instructed family members to be treated, everyone should receive treatment at the same time to prevent reinfestation.

Regarding pets:

Pets become infested with a different kind of scabies mite. If the pet is infested with scabies, (also called mange) and they have close contact with owner, the mite can get under the skin and cause itching and skin irritation. However, the mite dies in a couple of days and does not reproduce. The mites may cause itching for several days, but you do not need to be treated with special medication to kill the mites. Until the pet is successfully treated, mites can continue to burrow into the owner's skin and cause itching symptoms.