

Population & Public Health

Scabies Information for the General Public

- Scabies is a common skin condition caused by tiny insects called mites.
- Scabies can be unpleasant but they do not directly cause disease. If the skin gets infected, it can lead to complications.
- Having scabies doesn't mean you are not clean.

What are the symptoms?

- The mites that cause scabies dig deep into the skin and lay eggs. This leads to a rash that has small, red, raised spots. Itchiness is usually worse at night.
- The rash typically appears:
 - between the fingers,
 - in the groin area,
 - between the toes,
 - around the wrists or elbows,
 - But they can be found anywhere on the body.

How does it spread?

- Scabies spreads by close contact with someone's skin, such as when people share a bed. It often spreads within a household. Short contact, like shaking hands or a hug, usually will not spread scabies.
- It is occasionally spread from someone's clothes or personal items like bedding or clothing.
- The mites that cause scabies can live off skin for up to 3 days.
- Animals do not spread human scabies.

How is it treated?

- Scabies is treated with a cream or lotion that a health care provider prescribes. It is usually kept on the skin for several hours. You may need to do 2 treatments, 1 week apart.
- You must follow the directions you are given closely
- You may still be itchy for a few weeks, even if the mites have all died.
- Everyone who lives in the home will need to be treated at the same time because a family member can have scabies without yet showing symptoms.

What can you do?

- Call your health care provider if you think you have scabies.
- If you have scabies, wash all bed linen (sheets, pillowcases and blankets), towels and clothes in hot water and dry in a dryer at the hottest setting. This will kill the mites.
- Store things that can't be washed in an airtight plastic bag for 1 week to kill the mites.
- You can return to work or school once you have applied the first treatment.