

Scabies is an infestation of the skin with the microscopic mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. The mite burrows into the top layer of the skin where it feeds and lays eggs. Infestation is common, found worldwide, and affects people of all races and social classes.

Symptoms

- A rash appears about 2-6 weeks following the initial infection
- The rash is patchy, red, has intense itching – especially at night
- The rash is located on the webs of the fingers, the inner aspect of wrists and elbows and may appear on the forearms and trunk
- An adult male will likely develop the rash on the penis and scrotum
- Small children and babies often have rash on the face, scalp, palms, or soles of the feet
- Scratching at the itchy rash will cause sores that may then be infected by bacteria

Transmission

- Scabies is transmitted between humans by direct, prolonged skin-to-skin contact with an infected person.
- Clothing, bedding, and personal articles rarely transmit the mites between people. The mites do not survive more than a few days away from the human body.
- People can transmit (pass on) the mites soon after infestation, even during the asymptomatic period, until 24 hours after the initial treatment with a scabicide.

Treatment

- Once the diagnosis is established, treatment usually consists of an application of a cream or lotion containing scabies-killing insecticide – “scabicide”
- Some scabicial products include Kwell, Eurax, and Elimite. Each is available only by prescription and must be used according to the manufacturer’s directions to be effective.
- A second treatment is necessary in 7-10 days to kill any newly hatched mites that survived the initial treatment, except when using Elimite.

Prevention

- Routine washing and drying of clothing, bedding, and personal articles used by persons infected by the mite or sealing those items which cannot be washed inside plastic bags for 7-10 days is sufficient to kill scabies mites.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.