

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN

HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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Scabies

What is Scabies?

Scabies is a skin disease, caused by an almost invisible "mite", often called the "itch mite", which can live under the skin.

Who can get Scabies?

Anyone can.

What are the symptoms?

Scratching/itching (usually worse at night) from the female mite digging/tunneling under the skin to lay eggs (one to three per day). "Lesions" or burrowed areas appear most often in finger webs, wrists, elbows, under arms, belt line, thighs and genital areas. Secondary skin infections are possible from open areas on skin.

How long after exposure do symptoms first begin?

Two to six weeks from the first exposure; one to four days if re-exposed.

How is it spread?

Scabies is spread by skin to skin contact from an infected person (case) to another person. The mite does not jump and does not survive long in clothing (underclothes) or linens (bedsheets).

How long is the person contagious?

A person can spread scabies until the condition is treated; eggs and mites are only destroyed using specific medicines, such as lindane or permethrin lotions.

Are there complications?

- No, not if diagnosed and treated promptly. If left untreated, a rash or other skin infections may develop along with Scabies. A person can get Scabies as often as they are exposed.
- Itching that continues after treatment may NOT be a treatment failure and is normal. If new lesions or burrows appear, another treatment would be needed.

Is there a treatment for Scabies?

Yes. Scabies must be diagnosed and treated by prescription from a health care provider or public health clinic. The prescribed lotions are spread on the skin, after a hot soapy shower or bath, over the entire body. Lotion should remain on the skin for 12 hours. All other persons living in the house or having close contact with the case must also have **one** treatment at the same time as the case.

How can Scabies be prevented?

Seek help promptly from your local health care provider or public health clinic to detect and treat early.

All infected persons are excluded from school/work until the day after treatment.

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Steps for Scabies Treatment

Adults and Children:

- 1) Take a hot soapy bath or shower, scrubbing all involved areas of body below neck to remove crusts and scales.
- 2) Rinse and dry skin (allow skin to cool).
- 3) Apply a thin layer of prescribed medicine (for example, lindane lotion or permethrin cream) to the entire body below the neck. (The amount of lotion/cream prescribed is usually more than enough for the average sized adult for one coating of the skin.)
- 4) Leave lotion/cream on for 12 hours, then repeat hot soapy bath or shower.
- 5) Dress in freshly laundered clothing after each bath or shower.
- 6) All close or household contacts should be treated at the same time following steps 1-5.
- 7) Only one treatment is needed to kill scabies. The itching may last as long as two to three weeks after initial treatment. A second treatment should not be done unless new lesions or burrows appear.

Household Cleaning Instructions

- 1) Freshly laundered clothing (including coats, gloves) and bedding (sheets, pillowcases, mattress pads, blankets, spreads) should be put on after each treatment.
- 2) All clothing and bedding should be washed in hot water and soap and dried in a hot dryer, or dry cleaned.
- 3) Toys should be laundered or cleaned.
- 4) Vacuum mattresses, pillows, carpeting, and upholstered furniture thoroughly.
- 5) If an item of the type listed above cannot be laundered or dry cleaned, storage in a plastic bag for two weeks will assure no spread from that item.

For more information on Scabies, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.

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