



Scabies

(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is Scabies?

Scabies is an infestation of the skin with the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. Infestation is common and affects people of all races and social classes. Scabies spreads quickly in crowded conditions where there is a lot skin-to-skin contact between people, such as in hospitals, institutions, child-care facilities, and nursing homes.

What are the signs and symptoms of Scabies?

- Pimple-like irritations or rash of the skin, especially in the following places:
 - In-between the fingers,
 - The skin folds on the wrist, elbow, or knee,
 - The penis, the breast, and shoulder blades.
- Intense itching over most of the body and more so at night.
- Sores on the body due to scratching.

How is scabies spread?

- Direct skin-to-skin contact over a period of time with a person already infested with scabies.
 - Contact must take place over a period of time. So, a handshake or hug is not likely to spread scabies.
- It is easily spread to sexual partners and household members.
- Sharing clothes, towels, and bedding.

Once infested with Scabies, how long until symptoms appear?

- For a person who has never had scabies before: 4-6 weeks



- For a person who has had scabies before: Within several days

How can a doctor tell if I have scabies?

A doctor can usually tell by looking at the rash. A skin scraping may be taken to look for mites, eggs, or mite fecal matter to confirm their diagnosis. If a skin scraping is taken and comes back negative, it is possible that you may still be infested. In general, there are less than 10 mites on the entire body of an infested person. This makes it easy for an infestation to be missed.

Can Scabies be treated?

Yes. There are many lotions that are available to treat scabies. Generally, the lotion is applied to a clean body from the neck down to the toes and left overnight (8 hours). After 8 hours, the person will 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 needed 7-10 days later. Pregnant women and children are often treated with milder scabies medications.

Once treatment begins, how long before I feel better?

- Itching may continue for 2-3 weeks. This does not mean that you are still infested.
- Your doctor may prescribe additional medications to relieve itching if it is severe.
- No new irritations or rashes should appear 24-48 hours after treatment.