

SCABIES



(Photo of the itch mite greatly enlarged)

What it is: Scabies is a highly contagious parasitic infestation caused by a burrowing mite (commonly known as the itch mite). This mite burrows under the skin of humans and is transmitted from one human to another.

What it looks like: A skin disease characterized by pimples and tiny burrows that appear as slightly discolored lines. Areas most affected are skin folds, such as between fingers, inside elbow, inner thighs, waistline, genital area and between buttocks.

Symptoms: Intense itching (especially at night) and burrowing marks on the skin.

Length of time it takes to see symptoms after contact: Initially, it takes approximately 2-6 weeks from the time of contact for symptoms to appear. Incubation time is always shorter when an individual is reinfested; symptoms reappear almost immediately.

Transmission: Scabies are most often transmitted by close personal contact with infested individuals. It may also be transmitted by using or sharing belongings of an infested person such as unlaundered clothing and sharing of a bed. Mites are also transmitted by such physical contact as dancing and holding hands. If one member of the family has scabies, the other members usually soon get it.

Treatment: After being diagnosed with scabies, a prescription lotion or cream will need to be used according to directions. A second treatment, one week after the first course, may be needed depending upon the type of medication used. It is also necessary to wash all bed linen and clothing in hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Anything that is unable to be washed should be dry cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for a minimum of 7 days.

Preventing reinfestation: It is important that every member of the family be examined and that everyone infected have treatment.

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“A biography of the Scabies Mite” and “Communicable Diseases in Child Care Settings”