

# **Scabies Fact Sheet**

## **What is scabies?**

It is a fairly common infestation of the skin caused by a mite. Scabies mites burrow into the skin producing pimple-like irritations or burrows.

## **Who gets scabies?**

It can affect people from all socioeconomic levels without regard to age, sex, race, or standards of personal hygiene. Clusters of cases, or outbreaks, are occasionally seen in health care facilities, institutions, and child care centers.

## **How is scabies spread?**

It is transferred by any direct skin-to-skin contact. Indirect transfer from undergarments or bedding can occur only when these items have been in contact with an infected person immediately beforehand. Scabies can also be transmitted during sexual contact.

## **What are the symptoms of scabies?**

Intense itching that may be worse at night. The areas of the skin most affected by scabies include the webs and sides of the fingers, around the wrists, elbows and armpits, waist, thighs, and groin area.

## **How soon do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms may appear two to six weeks after contact with the mite in people who have not previously been exposed to scabies infestations. People who have been previously infested with scabies mites may show symptoms within one to four days after re-exposure.

## **When and for how long is a person able to spread scabies?**

A person is able to spread scabies until mites and eggs are destroyed by treatment.

## **What is the treatment for scabies?**

For a positive diagnosis and treatment see your doctor. Positive identification of the mite can be made only by using a microscope. It can be cured in 24-48 hours with medication. However, the itching may last for 2-3 weeks, and is not a sign of medication failure. The typical treatment is a lotion which is to be applied thoroughly from the neck down and be left on for the recommended amount of time. Wash all clothing and bedding in hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Items such as stuffed animals and blankets that cannot be washed can be placed in an airtight bag for 2 weeks, or can be placed in a dryer on high for at least 1 hour. Vacuum all chairs and carpets where the infected individual has spent time. There is no immunity to scabies. If signs of scabies show up again, you need to return to your doctor for additional treatment. All household members should be treated at the same time. Persons with scabies should be excluded from school or work until the day after treatment.

## **How soon after treatment will symptoms resolve?**

Itching may continue for 2-3 weeks, and does not mean that you are still infested. Health care providers may prescribe additional medication for the itching if it is severe. No new burrows or rashes should appear 24-48 hours after effective treatment.

## **What can be done to prevent the spread of scabies?**

Avoid physical contact with infested individuals and their belongings, especially clothing and bedding. Health education on the biology of scabies, proper treatment and the need for early recognition, diagnosis, and treatment of infested individuals and contacts is extremely important.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call the Bay County Health Dept at 989-895-4003.

Visit our website at <http://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/> or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)