

DESCRIPTION

A skin disorder caused by little bugs called mites (the "itch" mite). Scabies is very contagious, and can be spread from person-to-person or by sharing clothing, towels, or bedding. It may take as long as four to six weeks after you have been exposed for the rash to first appear.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- A rash with small, very itchy, red bumps or blisters. They may look like pimples. Scabies usually infects the skin of the finger webs, and folds under the arms, breasts, elbows, genitals, and buttocks.
- Sores can form on the skin where it has been scratched.

CAUSES

A mite that burrows into deep skin layers, where the female mite lays her eggs. Eggs grow into adult mites in three weeks. Mites are so tiny that they can only be seen under a microscope. If you scratch the skin area, the mites and eggs get under the fingernails and then get spread to other places in the body.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Living in a place with many other people such as a school dorm, or living in a place that is not kept very clean.
- Children in child care centers.
- Standing close to or touching the skin of a person who has scabies. It can be spread by sexual contact.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The skin will usually heal in about two weeks with treatment. The itching can last for up to four weeks even after treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Sores from scratching the itchy skin may become infected with bacteria.
- You can be reinfected with scabies.

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider can diagnose scabies by looking at the affected skin area. Sometimes the skin may be scraped to gather the mites so they can be looked at under a microscope.
- Treatment is with medication to be used on the skin.
- Use hot water to wash all clothes, towels, bedding, and washable toys used two days before and during treatment. You don't need to clean furniture or floors with special care. Put items you can't wash in plastic bags for two weeks to kill the mites.

MEDICATIONS

Several different lotions or creams can be used for treatment. Follow your health care provider's instructions or read the directions that come with the product. Infants and pregnant women may need a milder lotion than that used for other family members.

- Take a bath or shower before applying the lotion.
- Apply from the neck down, and cover the entire body. Wait 15 minutes before dressing.
- Leave lotion on the skin for 8 to 12 hours then take a bath or shower to remove it.
- Your family or other close contacts should be treated at the same time.
- You may need to repeat the lotion treatment if the rash does not go away in a few weeks, or if it gets worse after being treated.

In some cases, an anti-itching medication may also be prescribed.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- After treatment, the skin shows signs of infection (redness, pus, swelling, or pain).