



Scabies (Sarcoptic itch, Sarcoptic acariasis)

What is it?

A common skin condition caused by a tiny insect called a mite. They are unpleasant but do not cause disease.

How is it spread?

- Usually prolonged skin-to-skin contact with an infected person such as sharing a bed or within a household.
- Occasionally acquired during sexual contact.
- By contact with contaminated clothes, undergarments, bedding, towels or furniture.
- It does not usually spread with short contact like shaking hands or a hug.
- Mites can live off skin for up to 3 days.

What are the symptoms?

- The mites dig deep into the skin and lay eggs. This causes a rash with small, red, raised spots. It is very itchy-usually worse at night.
- Rash is usually in skin folds such as between fingers and toes, in the groin area, or around the wrists or elbows, but can be anywhere on the body.
- In infants and young children the rash can look like curvy, thread-like lines, tiny red bumps or scratch marks that appear on the scalp, face, neck, palms of the hands and soles of the feet.
- Itching may persist for a few weeks after treatment. This is not a sign of treatment failure or re-infestation.
- Secondary skin infections can occur from the scratching.

When do symptoms start?

- 4 - 6 weeks after being exposed to someone infected with scabies for the first exposure.
- If previously infested, symptoms may develop 1 - 4 days after exposure, but may be milder.

How long is it contagious?

- See a health care provider for treatment with medicated creams or lotions, especially for children, pregnant women, and those with skin disorders.
- The family and close contacts should be treated at the same time since one can have scabies and not yet have symptoms. This will prevent reinfestation.
- Multiple courses of treatment may be required.

How is it prevented?

- Wash all bedding, towels, and clothes worn or used in the 3 days before start of treatment. Use the hottest water and drying cycle.
- Store items that cannot be washed in an airtight plastic bag for 1 week to kill the scabies.
- Avoid sharing undergarments, clothing and towels.
- If you have had skin-to-skin contact with someone infested with scabies consider treatment. Those with crusted scabies and their close contacts should be treated promptly.
- Environmental disinfection is unnecessary, but thorough vacuuming is recommended if someone with crusted scabies has used a space.

Should I go to childcare, school or work?

Return after the first treatment applied.

For further information, please contact the Communicable Disease Control (CDC) Program at 705-474-1400 or toll free at 1-800-563-2808, ext. 5229.



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Fact Sheet for WI-CDC-011 – 2024-05-21