



Scabies

What causes it?

Scabies is a skin rash caused by a parasite (a bug that needs to be in contact with the body in order to live). It is too small to see.

How is it spread?

Scabies is spread by direct, prolonged skin to skin contact with someone who has it. This includes sharing a bed or any other close physical contact. Scabies can also be passed from one person to another by exchanging clothing or sharing sheets or towels. A quick handshake or hug usually does not spread it, but holding hands can.

Once you have come in contact with someone who has scabies, it can take up to four to six weeks for symptoms to start. If you have had scabies before, it can take less time (one to four days) for the symptoms to begin.

How can you tell if you have scabies?

People with scabies get a pimple-like rash with red bumps or bumps with fluid or pus inside. The bumps can show up on any part of the body, but are most often seen on the skin folds at the wrists, elbows and knees, between fingers and toes, at the waist and on the penis or breast. In babies under two years old, scabies can also show up on the head, neck, palms and soles of the feet.

White or red thread-like areas may be seen on the skin (this is where the mite digs into and under the skin). However, scratching can make it hard to see these thread-like areas.

The rash is usually very itchy. It is often worse at night. If you think you or your child(ren) may have scabies, see your health care provider right away.

How can you get rid of scabies?

Medications and washing clothing, towels and sheets with detergent in hot water and drying them in a hot dryer will get rid of the mites. The usual medicine is listed below.

Elimite (Permethrin 5%) (cream)

- Can be used on children as young as two months of age.
- Rub into skin from head to soles of the feet; including the scalp in infants.
- Leave on for eight to 14 hours.
- Wash well with soap and water (this is best done in the shower).
- Some discomfort (e.g., itching, burning, numbness) may continue and increase for a short while. See your health care provider if this is very uncomfortable.
- One dose is usually enough to get rid of scabies.

How do you keep from getting scabies again or giving it to others?

- Because it may take a long time (four to six weeks) to develop the rash after you have been in contact with the mite, all members of the household, including close contacts of family members, should use the medicine at the same time. This should also include a babysitter's household. Since the number of children in a school or child care group is large and usually all children do not have close contact, we **do not** suggest treating everyone in these places. However, the teacher or director should be told about the scabies in order to inform other parents.
- Sheets, towels and clothing worn next to the skin should be washed in hot water with detergent and dried in a hot dryer or dry cleaned.
- Blankets and clothing that cannot be washed can be stored in plastic bags for one week to be sure the mites have died.
- Spraying the house is not necessary.
- Children with scabies may return to school/child care the day after treatment is completed.

For more information, contact the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at 336-641-7777 or visit our website at www.guilfordcountync.gov

Free language assistance is available upon request.