

Scabies

Scabies is a skin infection caused by tiny bugs called mites. It is a highly contagious infection. It often spreads from person to person while they are sleeping together in the same bed or have close personal contact, such as sex. The mites burrow into the skin. Then they lay eggs that hatch a few days later. They like to live in warm moist areas of the body such as between the fingers and toes, skin folds, under the breasts, genital areas, the waist, and armpits. Scabies can infect people of all ages. Children and young adults are most likely to get scabies.

Signs and symptoms

It may take 4–6 weeks for symptoms to appear after coming in contact with an infected person. The mites cause intense itching, especially at night, and there is usually a rash with small pimples or red bumps. There may also be crusty skin.

Testing

Your doctor may take tiny scrapings of skin and look for the mites under a microscope.

Treatment

Special lotions containing lindane will kill the mites and their eggs. Follow directions carefully. Pregnant women, children under age 2, and people with sores or cuts on the skin must not use lindane products. Talk to your doctor about treatments that are safe for you. You may have to be treated more than once. The itching may continue for 2–3 weeks after treatment.

Anyone in close contact with an infected person in the last month must also be tested and treated. You will get scabies again unless everyone is treated.

Wash bedding, towels, and clothing in hot water and dry them in a hot dryer. This will kill any mites that may be on them. Dry cleaning will also kill mites. Items that cannot be washed or dry cleaned can be wrapped in a plastic bag and sealed for 3–4 weeks.

Learn more about scabies

If you have questions or need more information, contact your doctor, local health department, or community clinic, or call the National STD Hotline at **1-800-227-8922**.

For persons with disabilities this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TTY/TDD 1-800-833-6388).