



Scabies

What is it?

- Scabies is a highly contagious skin rash caused by the human itch mite (*Sarcoptes scabiei*)
- The adult female scabies mites burrow into the upper layer of the skin where they live and deposit their eggs
- It causes intense itching which is often worse at night
- The rash can develop anywhere on the body but is found mostly on the hands, breasts, armpits, groin and waistline
- On a baby, the rash may be on the head, face, neck and body
- Scabies can be caught by anyone and has nothing to do with cleanliness

How is it spread?

- It is spread by direct contact - from person to person - particularly during prolonged skin to skin contact with a person who already has scabies
- It can also be spread by sharing towels, clothing and bedding with someone who has scabies
- Scabies mites cannot jump or fly from one person to another

Where is it found?

- People are the main source for scabies infestation
- Infestation from animals is uncommon since animal mites do not typically replicate in humans

Prevention and control

- Early detection, treatment, and implementation of appropriate isolation and infection control practices are essential in preventing scabies outbreaks
- Avoid prolonged skin-to-skin contact with anyone who has scabies
- Do not share towels, clothing or bedding with someone with scabies
- In an institutional setting like a hospital or long term care home, a person with scabies may be required to remain in their room until 24 hours after completing scabies treatment
- Wear gloves and gowns when providing direct care to a person with scabies
- Clean hands well and often with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- Personal belongings and all bedding should be washed and dried on hot cycles or dry cleaned
- Vacuum carpeted floors and upholstered furniture thoroughly
- Treatment of scabies involves the application of creams or lotions that kill the mites
- Contact your health care provider or occupational health department if you think you may have scabies
- Always follow specific directions from your doctor or from your drug store
- Treatment of close contacts - including household members and sexual partners - is recommended