



Central Michigan District Health Department
“Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities”

For more information, call your local CMDHD branch office:

Arenac (989) 846-6541/Clare (989) 539-6731/Gladwin (989) 426-9431/
Isabella (989) 773-5921/Osceola (231) 832-5532/Roscommon (989) 366-9166

www.cmdhd.org

Scabies

What is scabies?

Scabies is a contagious skin disease, caused by infestation with the parasitic itch mite, sometimes called the “seven-year-itch” because it was hard to get rid of before modern medications. They usually appear in the folds of your skin, but can be found on any part of your body. It is a common condition that your doctor can easily treat.

How do scabies mites live?

The tiny mites burrow into the skin layers where they live and reproduce. They may be located anywhere on the body, but usually are not found on the face or scalp.

How do scabies mites develop?

The adult female mite burrows into the skin, feeds on cell fluids, and lays two or three eggs a day inside the burrow. The eggs hatch in three or four days and the young mites grow to mature egg-laying adults in seven to ten days.

How long do scabies mites live?

Each mite lives about two months on the human host. During this time, a female can lay up to 120 eggs. Off the human host, mites can survive three to four days under the best conditions, but usually they will live only a few hours.

How do we get scabies?

By skin-to-skin contact with someone who has scabies or by sharing their infested clothing, towels, or bedding.

Will human scabies mites live on pets?

No. This type of scabies mite can only live and reproduce on humans.

Can scabies mites hop, jump, or fly?

No. These mites can only crawl. They crawl about one inch per minute on the skin surface.

What are the symptoms of scabies?

Itching is the most noticeable symptom and is usually more severe at night. Scratching many cause bleeding resulting in blood spotting of bed clothing and sheets. There is usually a skin rash consisting of red, itchy bumps. Symptoms may not appear for four to six weeks after infestation. During this time, the body builds up a sensitivity to the mites before itching and rash will appear.

How do we know when we have scabies?

When symptoms as described above appear, see a doctor. The doctor will then determine if the condition is due to scabies or something else.

How do we get rid of scabies?

The doctor will prescribe medication to be applied to the skin from the neck down to and including the bottoms of the feet. All previously worn clothing and used bedding should be washed, and the home should be thoroughly cleaned to prevent reinfestation. All instructions must be followed exactly and medication should never be applied more often than directed. When one member of the family has scabies, it is important that all members be treated at the same time because they may have mites but not yet developed symptoms.

Where can I get help or assistance?

From a physician, local health department, or in the case of students, from the school nurse. Carefully follow all instructions including medication schedules and household control recommendations.

Some points to remember:

- Anyone can get scabies. It is not a sign of poor hygiene or being dirty.
- The symptoms of scabies may not develop for four to six weeks after infestation with the mite; however, the mites may spread to other persons during this period, as well as after symptoms develop.
- Early diagnosis and treatment of cases prevents spread to other people. If symptoms appear, see a doctor as soon as possible.
- Itching may continue for a period of time after treatment. This is common and is not a sign of treatment failure or an indication for retreatment.
- To eliminate scabies mites from the home:
 - mop floors
 - vacuum carpets and upholstered furniture
 - wipe off other furniture with a general cleaning agent or an oiled dust cloth
 - pesticide sprays are not necessary or recommended for control of mites in the home
- To eliminate mites from clothing or bedding:
 - wash with hot water and detergent and/or machine dry with high heat
 - dry clean
 - seal in a plastic bag for seven days, or
 - expose to freezing temperatures for about 12 hours (outdoors during winter)