

What is scabies?

Scabies is a condition of the skin caused by a microscopic mite. Female mites burrow into the upper layer of the skin where they live and lay eggs. Scabies often causes pimple-like irritations and severe itching. Occasionally bacterial infections may occur following intense scratching at the site of the burrow.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of scabies is intense itching, particularly at night. The areas of the skin most affected by scabies include the webs and sides of the fingers, around the wrists, elbows and armpits, waist, thighs, genitalia, abdomen, and lower buttocks. In infants younger than two years of age the symptoms are likely to appear on the head, face, neck, palms, and soles of the feet. The burrows created by the mites often appear as tiny whitish or gray lines on the skin.

How long does this disease last?

After becoming infested with scabies, it usually takes 4-8 weeks for symptoms to begin. A person may still spread scabies even before symptoms start. A person can spread scabies until mites and eggs are destroyed, usually after one treatment with an effective anti-scabies medication.

How is scabies spread?

Mites that cause scabies are transferred by direct skin-to-skin contact with a person who has scabies. Less commonly, scabies may spread by sharing clothing, towels, or bedding with a person who has scabies.

Who is at risk for scabies infection?

Scabies infestations can affect people from all socioeconomic levels without regard to age, sex, race, or standards of personal hygiene. Clusters of cases, or outbreaks, are occasionally seen in early childcare centers and schools.

What preventive measures and treatments are available?

To prevent the spread of scabies:

- Avoid physical contact with infected people and their belongings, especially clothing and bedding.
- Launder bedding and clothing worn by the infected person in the 3 days before treatment has started. Wash in hot water and hot drying cycle
- Items that cannot be laundered should be sealed in a closed plastic bag for at least 4 days to a week. Scabies mites generally cannot live away from humans for more than 4 days.



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- Use of environmental pesticides should be avoided.

Treatments include medicated lotions applied to the skin. In severe cases, a medication taken by mouth may be needed. Any treatment for scabies must be prescribed by a healthcare provider. Itching may continue for one to two weeks after treatment. If itching persists for more than 2-4 weeks after treatment or a new pimple-like rash and/or borrows appear, retreatment is needed. Household members of a person with scabies or those who have had prolonged direct skin-to-skin contact with the person may also need to be treated at the same time, even if they have no symptoms.

What should schools do?

- Notify affected families of close contacts.
- Educate families and staff about scabies, proper treatment, and the need for early diagnosis and treatment of infested people and contacts.
- Rooms used by a person with scabies should be thoroughly cleaned and vacuumed.
- Report clusters of cases to CDPH.

What are recommendations for exclusion?

People with scabies should be excluded from school or daycare until the day after treatment is initiated.

For more information, visit [About Scabies | CDC](#) or [Scabies - Symptoms and Causes | Mayo Clinic](#)

