

Scabies

Scabies is caused by *Sarcoptes scabiei*, a microscopic mite that causes skin infestations. People get scabies when the mite burrows into the top layer of skin to live and feed. When the skin reacts to the mite, an extremely itchy rash develops.

Scabies is common in children, and at childcare centers. It is also found at nursing homes and extended-care facilities. A scabies infestation does not develop because of poor personal hygiene.

What do they look like?

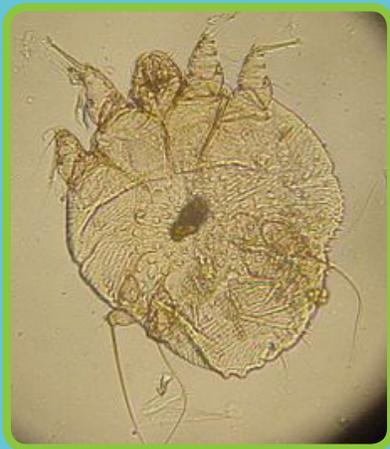
The scabies mite is an eight-legged arthropod with a round body. It is barely visible to the human eye, and females (larger than males) are less than 0.5 mm in length.

How do you know if you have scabies?

Scabies is diagnosed by microscopic examination of skin scrapings and these signs and symptoms:

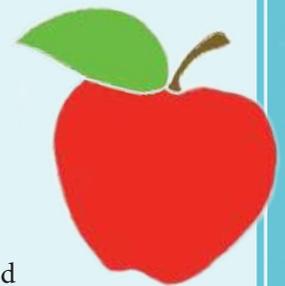
- Raised, red, pimple-like itchy bumps or sores on the skin; tiny blisters may also be present
- Red streaks on the skin
- Tiny, raised, crooked, grayish-white or skin-colored burrows on the skin surface
- Intense itching, particularly at night

The itching and rash may affect any part of the body. Commonly affected areas include the webbing between the fingers, wrists, elbows, armpits, waist/belt-line, buttocks and genitalia.



Above:
Figure 1. A photomicrograph of an itch mite (*Sarcoptes scabiei*). (wikipedia.org/).

Right:
Figure 2.
Close-up photo of a scabies burrow. The large scaly patch at the left is due to scratching. The scabies mite traveled toward the upper right and can be seen at the end of the burrow, photo by Michael Geary



Did You Know?

- Scabies is an ancient affliction, estimated to have infected humans for the last 2,500 years.
- Scabies is one of the three most common skin disorders in children.
- Typically, an infested person only has 10 to 15 mites on the body.
- Scabies is prevented by avoiding direct skin-to-skin contact with an infested person or with items such as clothing or bedding used by an infested person.
- Products used to treat scabies are called scabicides.



Above:
Figure 3. **Scabies rash:** Small, pus-filled bumps on the sole are often a sign of scabies in infants and young children. © 1995- 2014 . *The Nemours Foundation/ KidsHealth®*.



Managing Scabies With Integrated Pest Management

- Treatment is recommended for household members and sexual contacts, particularly those who have had prolonged skin-to-skin contact with the infested person.
- All persons should be treated at the same time in order to prevent re-infestation.
- Retreatment may be needed if itching continues more than 2-4 weeks after treatment or if new burrows or rash continue to appear.
- The day you start treatment, wash your clothes, bedding, towels, and washcloths. Mites can survive for a few days without human skin. If a mite survives, you can get scabies again.
- In schools, vacuum carpeted areas and clean tiled floors.
- Vacuum your entire home on the day you start treatment. Vacuum carpeting, area rugs, and all upholstered furniture. After you finish vacuuming, throw away the bag. If your vacuum does not have a bag, empty the canister. You should wash a removable canister with hot, soapy water. If you cannot remove the canister, wipe it clean with a damp paper towel.
- There are no “over-the-counter” (non-prescription) products approved for humans. Several medications are available by prescription; never use a medication intended for veterinary or agricultural use to treat humans. Carefully follow the instructions provided by the doctor and pharmacist, as well as those contained in the box or printed on the label.

How do they spread?

Scabies is spread by direct prolonged, skin-to-skin contact with an affected individual or through direct, immediate contact with contaminated clothing or linens. When a person is infested with scabies mites the first time, symptoms may not appear for up to two months. However, an infested person can transmit scabies, even if they do not have symptoms.

Mites do not reproduce or survive without a human host, so inanimate objects other than contaminated clothing or linens (like toys and desks) and surfaces are not important in the spread of scabies.

Animals do not spread human scabies. Pets can become infested with a different kind of scabies mite that does not survive or reproduce on humans but causes “mange” in animals.

How long can scabies mites survive?

On a person, adult female mites can live for as long as a month. Scabies mites usually do not survive more than 43-72 hours off a person. Children and adults usually can return to childcare, school, or work the day after treatment.

How are scabies treated?

If you think you have scabies, seek medical help. Remember, people of all ages, races, and income levels get scabies.

For more info. check out:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Scabies

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/index.html>

American Academy of Dermatology: Scabies

<http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/q--t/scabies>