

SCABIES

SCABIES CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE

Getting scabies is not necessarily a sign of poverty, poor health habits or being unclean. Scabies can occur at any age, in any family and is common among school age children. This is why it is important to learn how to recognize scabies infestation and what to do if it occurs. The family cat or dog cannot get scabies.

WHAT IS SCABIES?

Scabies are tiny mites that are about 1/50 of an inch long. They crawl on the skin and then the female burrows into the skin to lay her eggs. It may take 2-6 weeks for the person to become sensitized and develop symptoms. If this is a repeat infestation, the symptoms may occur in 1 to 4 days. The mites cannot live if they are not in contact with humans for more than 3 to 4 days.

HOW IS SCABIES SPREAD?

Scabies is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person. The likelihood of transmission depends upon the length and type of contact. Transmission may be possible soon after the initial infestation and prior to symptoms.

WHAT SIGNS SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

The lesions of scabies are very small and difficult to see until sensitization occurs, a period of 2 to 6 weeks after infestation. The lesions, which may be small bumps, blisters, or tiny burrow lines, are usually located on the finger webs, inner aspects of the wrists and elbows, and the belt line. The head, neck, palms, and soles of the feet are usually spared, except in babies. Especially in adults, the lesions may occur on the forearms and trunk. Itching is intense especially at night. Once a person has been sensitized, a patchy red rash is frequently present. Complications may be infections due to scratching.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS SCABIES

1. Take your child to the doctor for a diagnosis and for a prescription for medication if he has scabies.
2. Apply the scabicide to the skin from the jaw line down, including the soles of the feet. Infants and toddlers should be treated on the head, neck and scalp also. Do not apply the medication to mucous membranes. The medication should be applied to dry skin and washed off at the time specified by the manufacturer. Itching may persist for 1 to 2 weeks after treatment and should not be regarded as a sign of drug failure or new infestation. New lesions indicate a second treatment may be necessary.
3. The student will stay home from school until 24 hours after the completion of the treatment.
4. Environmental sprays or extermination are not necessary. Routine washing and drying of clothing, especially underwear, bedding, and personal articles, is sufficient to kill the scabies mites. Seal any items that cannot be washed in a plastic bag for 7 to 10 days.
5. Family members should be treated at the same time, and some physicians may recommend treating other close contacts of the infested person.