

# FACT SHEET

# Scabies

## What is scabies?

Scabies is a skin disease caused by the infestation of the skin by the “itch mite.” The microscopic mites burrow into the upper layer of the skin where it lives and lays its eggs.

## How is scabies spread?

Scabies is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with infested individuals. It can also be spread during sexual contact or from contact with contaminated undergarments, bedding, or bedclothes.

## What are the symptoms?

- The most common symptoms of scabies are intense itching and a pimple-like skin rash.
- The red, itchy rash is commonly found between fingers, backs of hands, elbows, armpits, groin, breasts, penis, small of back, and buttocks.

Symptoms usually occur 2-6 weeks after exposure. However, the first time people get scabies it may take 4-8 weeks for symptoms to develop.

## How is scabies prevented?

Bedding, clothing, and towels used by infested persons or their household, sexual, and close contacts should be decontaminated by washing in hot water and drying in a hot dryer, by dry-cleaning, or by sealing in a plastic bag for at least 72 hours. Scabies mites generally do not survive more than 2 to 3 days away from human skin.

## How is scabies treated?

Once scabies is diagnosed, a lotion or cream containing a scabicide medication can be prescribed. Only permethrin or sulfur ointment should be used in infants. Simultaneous treatment is also recommended for all household contacts and sexual partners. Itching may continue for 2-3 weeks, even after proper treatment.

Infested individuals should be excluded from school or work for 24 hours after treatment.

*This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*

**Livingston County Health Department**

2300 East Grand River Avenue, Suite 102, Howell, MI 48843 • 517-546-9850 • [www.LCHD.org](http://www.LCHD.org)

Revised 2/2023