

Scabies

What is Scabies?

- Scabies is a skin disease caused by a tiny insect called an “itch mite” which burrows itself under the skin to lay its eggs.
- Scabies causes severe itching and is often called the “itch”.

What are the signs and symptoms of Scabies?

- Intense itching, mostly at night;
- Looks like small, red, slightly raised spots (a pimple-like rash) or streaks in the skin;
- May have tiny blisters;
- Common areas are between fingers, on wrists or belt lines and in the folds of the skin, but may appear anywhere on the body.

How do you get Scabies?

- You can get scabies by being in direct, prolonged skin-to-skin contact with a person who has scabies.
- It can be passed easily to sexual or household contacts of a person who has scabies.
- Scabies can also be spread by wearing that person’s clothing or by sleeping in that person’s bed, but this is less common.

Why is it important to treat Scabies?

- To stop the itching because scratching can lead to other infections.
- So you don’t pass scabies on to other people.

How do you get rid of Scabies?

- Don’t try to diagnose scabies by yourself. See a doctor to get a lotion or cream to help treat scabies.
- Follow the directions on the bottle carefully because the lotion or cream contains poison.
- If you have scabs or crusts from scratching, have a bath or shower first; this will soften them and let the medicine get under the skin. *Wait 15 minutes until the skin is cool and dry* before applying the lotion or cream.

- Cover your entire body from the neck down with the lotion or cream.
- Pay special attention to the areas that mites like to live in: between fingers and toes, in the belly button, armpits and in the skin around the waist and genital area when applying the lotion.
- Dress in freshly washed, clean clothes.
- Leave the lotion or cream on for 8 to 12 hours (overnight is a good time).
- Then take a bath or shower with warm water (not hot!) and wash well. Put on freshly-cleaned clothes.
- See the doctor in about seven days. If you need another treatment, you will be told at that time.
- All other household members and sexual contacts should be treated at the same time to prevent re-infestation.

Care of Clothing and Linens:

- The mite that causes scabies can live in clothing and bedding for three days.
- You can treat linen and clothes as follows:
 - Use hot water to wash all clothing, bed linens, towels and washcloths that have been used or worn within one week before the treatment.
 - Dry clothes, blankets, towels, etc. in the dryer at the hottest setting for 15 minutes.
 - Place stuffed animals and items that cannot be washed in a sealed plastic bag for 3 days.

***For more information contact:
your local public health office,
OR your physician or nurse practitioner,
OR HealthLine at 811,***

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics (2012), Kids Health (2011)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010)