

# Scabies

## What is scabies?

An infestation of the skin by small insects called mites

## What are the signs or symptoms?

- Rash, severe itching (increased at night).
- Itchy red bumps or blisters found on skin folds between the fingers, toes, wrists, elbows, armpits, waistline, thighs, penis, abdomen, and lower buttocks.
- Children younger than 2 years are likely to be infested on the head, neck, palms, and soles of feet or in a diffuse distribution over the body.

## What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation period
  - ~ Four to 6 weeks for those who have never been infected.
  - ~ One to 4 days for those who have been previously infected (repeated exposures tend to be milder).
- Contagious period: Until the insect infestation is treated.

## How is it spread?

- Person-to-person contact
- Sharing of bedding, towels, and clothing

## How do you control it?

- Launder bedding and clothing (hot water and hot drying cycle) worn next to skin at least 4 days before start of treatment.
- Items that cannot be laundered should be placed in plastic bags for at least 4 days.

## What are the roles of the caregiver/teacher and the family?

- Report the infection to staff designated by the child care program or school for decision making and action related to care of ill children. That person, in turn, alerts possibly exposed family members and staff to watch for symptoms.
- Contact health professional if itching continues after several weeks of treatment.
- Family members and very close contacts should be treated at the same time as the child, even if no signs or symptoms are present.

## Exclude from group setting?

**Yes, until after treatment is completed.**

## Readmit to group setting?

After treatment has been completed (usually overnight)

## Comment

Scabies affects people from all socioeconomic levels without regard to sex, age, or personal hygiene.

