

Scabies

What is it?

Scabies are tiny mites that burrow under the skin where they live and reproduce. They are very small and hard to see.

How do I know if I have it?

The most common symptom is intense itching. This is caused by the mites burrowing under the skin to lay eggs. The mites like warm areas of skin, especially the groin and armpits. The itch is often worse after a hot shower or in a warm bed.

Tiny red or grey burrow tracks can appear between the fingers and on the wrists. They may also be found in armpits, on the bottom, the penis and feet.

Some people have a rash of very itchy red bumps. This is an allergic reaction to the mites and may take several weeks to develop.

Scabies are usually noticed within four weeks of catching them.

How did I get it?

Scabies are passed on between people by skin to skin contact. This can be sexual or non-sexual. Sometimes you can get them by sharing towels, clothes or a bed.

How can I make sure I don't get it?

It is hard to prevent because they are easily caught during close body contact.

How can the nurse/ Doctor tell me if I have it?

Scabies is diagnosed by examining the itchy areas under a bright light. You are unlikely to see scabies mites because they burrow under the skin, but they often leave fine red or grey marks that can be seen.

How can I get rid of it?

Scabies can be treated quickly and easily with a special cream or lotion. Follow the instructions carefully to make sure that you get rid of the mites completely. Treatment is usually repeated after 1 or 2 weeks. The itch often lasts for several weeks after treatment. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the best treatment.

Wash any clothing and linen that you have been in direct contact with.

Who do I need to tell and why?

If you have scabies it is important to tell your sexual partner so they can be treated. Also so they don't pass the mites back to you or on to anyone else. You may have to tell housemates who have shared clothing or linen with you. Ask your doctor if you aren't sure who you need to tell. They can help you with this and help you contact them.

This fact sheet is just some general information. If you are worried about your health go and see a doctor.