



## INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

### Scabies Patient Information

#### What is Scabies?

Scabies is related to a mite (tiny bug) called *Sarcoptes scabiei*. It affects people all over the world: young and old, rich and poor.



#### How do people get Scabies?

Humans are always the host; animals do not spread human Scabies. Without treatment, an infected person can transmit Scabies even with no symptoms.

Scabies moves from person to person:

1. by direct contact with skin (may be sexual partners or just people living in the same home)
2. sometimes by contact with clothing or bed sheets
3. Scabies can spread in crowded places where close body and skin contact is common however, a quick handshake or hug will usually not spread the bug; the contact needs to be longer
4. in child care facilities where children and caregivers have closer contact

#### What are the signs & symptoms of Scabies?

- Severe and constant itching, especially at night, is the first and most common symptom of Scabies. Itching and a skin rash are caused by an allergic reaction to the bug. Itching is worse at night, and scratching may cause bleeding and sometimes skin infections with bacteria as well.
- Pimple-like bumps, burrows or rashes are noticed 3 to 6 weeks after the first infection, or 1 to 4 days after previous exposures. This is because the allergy is stronger after the first infection. Areas most often affected with red, raised, itchy bumps are hands, especially in between fingers, wrists, elbows, knees, feet, armpits, bum and/or waist.
- Crusted (Norwegian) Scabies most commonly occurs in people with weak immune systems, elderly individuals or those who are very sick for a long time. It often appears as a wide-spread rash, with scales and sometimes blisters and scabs or crusts; itching may not be noticed at all. Norwegian Scabies spreads very easily because of the large number of mites in the skin.

## How is Scabies diagnosed?

Diagnosis of Scabies is usually made by looking carefully at the rash and seeing whether burrows are present. We can be fairly certain Scabies bugs are present when we see the bug itself, or its eggs or poop left behind.



## How is Scabies treated?

A special skin cream will be applied to all areas of your skin. Your Doctor may ask you to repeat the treatment after one week.

## What does the hospital do to prevent the spread of Scabies?

If you have Scabies, you may be moved to a private room, and your Doctors, Nurses and other healthcare workers will care for you wearing gloves and a gown. You will be placed on isolation until your treatment is finished. Your clothes and bed sheets will be changed.

Scabies mites do not normally survive more than 2 to 3 days off of the human body. To prevent spreading Scabies you must bath regularly, do not share clothes, towels or bed sheets with others, and limit close physical contact with others until your treatment is finished. During the time you have Scabies, you will be asked to stay in your room, but you will still be able to have visitors. It is very important that visitors clean their hands upon entering and exiting your room. Visitors who touch you will need to wear a gown and gloves.

## Are special precautions needed for Scabies at home?

1. Treatment is recommended for people that live in the same house as you, and for people you have sex with, particularly those who have had long, direct skin-to-skin contact with you when you had the Scabies mites.
2. All clothes, bedding and towels used during the three days before you were treated should be cleaned by:
  - a. washing in hot water and then drying on the hot setting,
  - b. ironing,
  - c. dry cleaning
  - d. leaving them in a tightly sealed plastic bag for at least 3 days.

If you have questions about the information, contact Queensway Carleton Hospital's Infection Prevention & Control at 613-721-2000, ext. 3777 or Ottawa Public Health:

<https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/diseases.aspx>