

## **SCABIES FACT SHEET**

### **What is scabies?**

Scabies is an infestation of the skin caused by a mite. The female mite burrows into the top layer of the skin. This forms a slightly raised tunnel where the mite lays eggs and leaves waste.

### **Who gets scabies?**

Anyone can get scabies.

### **How is scabies spread?**

The mite is passed from person to person by skin contact or sharing bedding, clothing or other linens with a person who has scabies.

### **What are the symptoms and when do they appear?**

The most common symptom is an itchy rash. Often the rash itches most at night. It can appear anywhere on the body but is usually on the hands, wrists, elbows, breasts, armpits, waistline, and groin.

Persons who have never had scabies before usually notice symptoms about 4 to 6 weeks after their contact with someone with scabies. Persons who have had scabies before may notice their symptoms sooner, often within a few days to 1 week.

Elderly persons, persons in institutions, and persons whose immune system is weak may not have itching. Any unusual skin problem should be checked by a doctor.

### **How long is a person able to spread scabies?**

A person is probably able to spread scabies from the moment of contact until after all treatment is complete.

### **How is scabies diagnosed?**

Scabies is diagnosed by a doctor or nurse looking at the rash and/or by taking a scraping from the skin.

### **What is the treatment?**

A medicated cream will be prescribed by your doctor. It is put on the skin, left on for several hours, and then washed off. You must put on clean clothes and use freshly laundered bed and bath linens. An oral medication may also be prescribed.

### **Can a person get scabies again?**

Yes. In fact, the symptoms (itching and rash) will appear more quickly.

### **Should infested persons be excluded from school or work?**

Yes, until treatment has been finished, but generally this is less than one day.

**What are the health problems associated with scabies?**

Usually none. Occasionally, secondary skin infections may occur from scratching.

**What can be done to prevent its spread?**

Persons with symptoms should be checked and treated by their doctor as quickly as possible. Household members and other persons with skin-to-skin contact should be preventively treated. Clothing, bedding, and bath linens used within the 4 days before initiation of therapy should be washed in a washer using hot water and dried using the hot drier cycle. Clothing and other items that cannot be laundered should be stored in a closed plastic bag for one week.