



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

Oahu 586-4586, Maui 984-8213, Hilo 933-0912,

Kona 322-4877, Kauai 241-3563

Scabies

What is scabies?

Scabies is a parasitic infection of the skin caused by a mite, *Sarcoptes scabiei*. The mites burrow under the skin and cause intense itching, especially at night.

How do you get it?

Transfer of parasites commonly occurs through prolonged direct contact with infested skin and also during sexual contact. Contact must be prolonged (a quick handshake or hug will usually not spread infestation). Infestation is easily spread to sexual partners and household members. Infestation may also occur by sharing clothing, towels, and bedding. Transfer from undergarments and bedclothes occurs only if these have been contaminated by infested people immediately beforehand.

What are the symptoms?

The most noticeable symptom of scabies is the intense itching it produces. The itching is most noticeable at the skin surface between the fingers, around the wrists, elbows or knees, armpits, nipples, belt line, abdomen, genitals (sex organs), and lower buttocks.

When do symptoms start?

The itching usually starts 2 to 6 weeks after infestation with mites. Individuals who have had scabies previously develop symptoms 1 to 4 days following another exposure to the mites.

What is the treatment?

A mild case of scabies is treated with a single application of a medicated skin cream prescribed by your doctor. This is followed by a hot water bath and soap. The itching is caused by the body's reaction to the mite. Because itching may continue for days or weeks after adequate treatment, it should not be used as an indication that the medication did not work.

Washing clothing, towels and bedding in hot cycles of both the washer and dryer will kill mites and eggs. Also, thorough vacuuming of environmental surfaces is recommended. This should be done at the same time that you treat for scabies with medication.

Should persons infested with mites be excluded from work or school?

Yes. Mite-infested persons are contagious until the day after they begin treatment.

How can you keep from getting it?

Avoid contact with an infested person until treatment is completed.

Do not share clothing, sheets or other linens belonging to a person with scabies.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/scabies/>