

# Scabies

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## What is it?

- Scabies is a skin rash caused by a tiny bug called a mite. The rash can be anywhere on the body, but is found mostly on the hands, breasts, armpits, groin and waistline. On a baby, the rash may be on the head, face, neck and body.
- The most common symptom is intense itching, which is worse at night.
- Anyone can get scabies. Elderly people or those with a weakened immune system can get a more severe kind called “crusted” or Norwegian scabies.

## How is it spread?

- Scabies is highly contagious. This means that it spreads easily from person-to-person.
- The scabies mite cannot jump or fly from person-to-person but moves from one person to another during prolonged skin-to-skin contact with a person who has scabies.
- It can also be spread by sharing towels, clothing and bedding.
- Anyone can pick up scabies.

## Is there treatment for it?

- Creams or lotions that kill the mite are applied to the skin. There is a pill available with a prescription.
- Always follow the directions from your doctor or pharmacist.
- Close contacts such as household members and sexual partners should receive treatment as well.
- Sometimes a second treatment may be needed.
- Itching may continue for 2 to 3 weeks after treatment and does not mean that you still have scabies.

## What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- Avoid prolonged skin-to-skin contact with anyone who has scabies.
- Do not share towels, clothing and bedding with someone who has scabies.
- Clothing and bed linens used in the 3 days before treatment should be washed and dried on hot cycles or dry-cleaned.
- Vacuum carpeted floors and upholstered furniture thoroughly.
- Flip your mattress.
- If you are in the hospital, you will be cared for using Contact Precautions (isolation) until successful treatment has been completed. Staff and visitors will wear a gown and gloves.

## For more information visit:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/sexual-health-sexually-transmitted-infections/canadian-guidelines/sexually-transmitted-infections/canadian-guidelines-sexually-transmitted-infections-31.html>

CDC Centres of Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/>

**Adherence to Infection Prevention and Control measures by staff and visitors is required to prevent the spread of infection.**

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| <p><b>Stop the spread of germs and infection.<br/>Clean your hands.</b></p> |  |
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This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask Infection Prevention & Control or your health care provider.