About…*Scabies*

What is scabies?

Scabies is an infestation of the skin caused by mites. Mites are small insects that can be seen only with a microscope. Mites burrow under the skin to lay eggs, which causes intense itching. Scabies is found worldwide and affects persons of all races and social classes.

How is scabies spread?

- Direct skin-to-skin contact with an infested person
- Sexual contact with an infested person
- Contact with bedding, towels, or clothing, including undergarments, of an infested person

Having scabies does not mean that the infested person has poor hygiene. Pets **do not** spread scabies.

Who is at risk for scabies?

Scabies can spread rapidly under crowded conditions where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact among people, e.g., long-term care facilities, child-care facilities, hospitals and other institutions. People with weakened immune systems and the elderly are at risk for a more severe form of scabies, called Norwegian, or crusted, scabies.

How do I know if I have scabies?

Persons who have scabies have:

- Severe itching (especially at night)
- Burrows, that look like thin wavy tunnels, where the mite has buried itself under the skin
- Sores or blisters from scratching the area

The most commonly affected sites include:

- Between the fingers
- Soles of the feet
- Along the inside of the wrists and inner elbows
- In the armpits
- Around the waist
- The buttocks area
- Around the breasts and male genital area

How is scabies diagnosed?

Consult your health care provider. Your health care provider can diagnose scabies by looking at the burrows or the rash and may take a skin scraping (to look for mites, eggs, or mite fecal matter) to confirm the diagnosis.

How is scabies treated?

Several lotions are available to treat scabies. Always follow the directions provided by your health care provider or the directions on the package insert. Generally, the lotion must be left on for 8 hours. After 8 hours, the person being treated should shower or bathe to wash off the lotion and then put on clean clothes. All clothes, bedding, and

towels used by the infested person 2 days (48 hours) before treatment should be washed in hot water and dried in a dryer on a hot setting. Sometimes a second treatment is needed 7-10 days later. No new burrows or rashes should appear 24-48 hours after effective treatment. Itching may continue for 2-3 weeks following treatment, but that does not mean someone is still infested. Your health care provider may prescribe additional medicine to help relieve itching if it is severe.

How is scabies prevented?

- Avoid skin-to-skin contact with anyone recently diagnosed with scabies.
- Children should not return to school until treatment has been completed.
- Wash the infested person's bedding, towels, and clothing, including undergarments, that were used or worn 48 hours before effective treatment was begun.
- Thoroughly vacuum mattresses and upholstered furniture.

For additional information on scabies, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at:
http://www.cdc.gov/Ncidod/dpd/parasites/scabies/factsht_scabies.htm

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