



## Scabies

### What is scabies?

An infestation of the skin by small insects called *mites*

### What are the signs or symptoms?

- Rash, severe itching (increased at night).
- Itchy red bumps or blisters found on skinfolds between the fingers, toes, wrists, elbows, armpits, waistline, thighs, genital areas, abdomen, and lower buttocks.
- Children younger than 2 years are likely to be infested on the head, neck, palms, and soles of feet or in a diffuse distribution over the body.

### What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation period
  - Four to 6 weeks for those who have never been infected
  - One to 4 days for those who have been previously infected and sensitized. (Repeated exposures tend to be milder but produce symptoms earlier after exposure.)
- Contagious period: Until the insect infestation is treated

### How is it spread?

Prolonged and close person-to-person contact

### How do you control it?

- Treatment of the affected child and family by a health professional, usually with a cream containing 5% permethrin.
- Launder bedding and clothing (hot water and hot drying cycle) worn next to skin during the 3 days before start of treatment.
- Items that cannot be laundered should be placed in plastic bags for at least 4 days. Scabies mites cannot survive away from humans for more than 4 days.



Rash of scabies, which is a widespread area of irritation, often with pink to red bumps along lines and tracks where the insects have burrowed—blisters and pimple-like lesions called pustules



Pustules on wrist and base of thumb

### What are the roles of the educator and the family?

- Report the infection to the staff member designated by the early childhood education program or school for decision-making and action related to care of ill children. That person, in turn, alerts possibly exposed family and staff members to watch for symptoms.
- Contact the child's health professional if itching continues for several weeks after treatment. This could represent a reinfestation.
- Family members and very close contacts should be treated at the same time as the child, even if no signs or symptoms are present.

## Exclude from educational setting?

At the end of the day, the child should consult a pediatric health professional and, if scabies is confirmed, the child should start treatment before returning. If treatment is started before the next day, no exclusion is necessary.

## Readmit to educational setting?

**Yes**, when treatment has been completed (usually overnight)

## Comments

- Scabies affects people from all socioeconomic levels without regard to sex, age, or personal hygiene.
- Itching is related to an allergic reaction to the mites and often goes on for weeks after effective treatment.

