

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

SCABIES



Scabies is a highly contagious, extremely itchy skin disease caused by a tiny burrowing mite called *Sarcoptes scabiei*. Intense itching occurs along the burrows in the skin, often worse at night. Scabies is easily transferrable through close contact in families, daycares, school classes and nursing homes. It can take several weeks for symptoms to occur, but it is contagious from the time of exposure.

DIAGNOSIS

Your provider will evaluate your exposure history and examine your skin. They may also take a scraping from a burrow area to examine under a microscope for the presence of mites or eggs.

TREATMENT

Scabies treatment is effective with several possible lotions and creams. Although these treatments kill the mites quickly, itching may continue for several weeks. Sometimes your provider can prescribe a topical steroid cream to help with this post-treatment itch. Your provider will likely recommend treatment for all household members or close contacts, regardless of symptoms, because scabies spreads so easily.

- **Permethrin cream** is the most common medication used to treat scabies. It is a topical cream that contains chemicals to kill scabies mites and eggs.
- **Other options** include lindane lotion, crotamiton or ivermectin.

PREVENTION

To prevent re-infestation and spread:

- Clean all clothes and linens with hot, soapy water and dry on high heat.
- Items that you cannot wash, try placing them in a sealed plastic bag for a couple of weeks to starve the mites.

RESOURCES

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/scabies/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20377383>

SYMPTOMS

- Severe itching, worse at night
- Thin, irregular burrow tracks made up of blisters or bumps on skin
- Typically, the rash is in folds of skin, especially between fingers, in armpits or around the waist.

RISK FACTORS

- Close physical contact with infected people
- Sharing of clothes or bedding