

## SCABIES

### What is Scabies?

Scabies is a common and annoying condition caused by tiny insects (itch mites) which dig under the skin. This causes a very itchy rash. Scabies is spread by humans through skin to skin contact while shaking hands, dancing, sharing clothes, bedding or towels and by sexual contact. Scabies is not caused by lack of proper cleanliness and it can affect anyone.

### What To Look For

Most people do not have signs of scabies until about three weeks after the mite digs under the skin.

The rash looks like curvy white threads, tiny red bumps, scratches or tiny blisters. It is very itchy, especially at night and the scratching the rash can cause eczema.

Often the rash first appears between the fingers around wrists and elbows. It also can be found in the armpits, under the breasts, along the belt line and navel, the inner thighs, the buttocks and genitals. Those with low immune systems such as HIV may have crusted scabies.

Scabies needs to be diagnosed by a doctor as other skin conditions can also cause a rash and itching.

### Treatment

A medicated treatment can be bought at a drugstore without a prescription. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, talk to a doctor or pharmacist.

Follow the instructions very carefully.

Do not have close contact with others. *Your sexual partners and household contacts within the past month need to be treated at the same time.*

On the same day that you use the medicated treatment, wash your bedding, towels and clothes in hot water. Place these in the dryer on the hottest cycle for 20 minutes. Dry clean anything that cannot be washed or place items in a sealed plastic bag for 3 to 7 days. Vacuum your mattress and empty out the vacuum.

Itching can last for several weeks after treatment with the medication. Itching is due to eggs and waste materials under the skin left behind by the mites. Itching can also be caused by the treatment as it dries out the skin. The itching will go away with time. A second treatment may be necessary.

**For more information, call  
Peel Public Health 905-799-7700  
or visit  
[intheknowpeel.ca](http://intheknowpeel.ca) [peelsexualhealth.ca](http://peelsexualhealth.ca) [peelregion.ca/health](http://peelregion.ca/health)**