

# ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## Office Administration

(269) 673-5411

## Bioterrorism Preparedness

673-5411

## Personal Health

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## Communicable Disease

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## Environmental Health

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## Resource Recovery

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## Scabies

(*Sarcoptes scabiei*, an itch mite)

### What is Scabies?

Scabies is a contagious skin disease caused by a tiny itch mite that burrows under the skin to live and reproduce.

### How is it spread?

Scabies is spread by close skin-to-skin contact with someone who has scabies, or by sharing infested clothing, bedding, or towels.

### What is the incubation period?

It takes about 4-6 weeks after exposure for symptoms to appear, but the mites can spread to others during that time.

### What are the early signs?

The most noticeable sign is intense itching, which is worse at night. There are small, red bumps that appear where the mite has been. Sometimes the bumps appear to follow a line and they most often are found in skin folds between the fingers, elbows, wrist, and waistline.

### What about contacts?

Anyone can get scabies. Direct contacts of someone with scabies should NOT be excluded from school, unless they have symptoms.

### How long is the person contagious?

Until the mites and eggs are destroyed by treatment; usually 48 hours after effective treatment (no new burrows or bumps appearing during that time).

### How are they treated?

Scabies is treated with a lotion, prescribed by a physician. Follow instructions for applying the lotion carefully. Apply the lotion to a clean body from the neck down to the toes and leave on overnight (8 hours). Shower in morning and put on clean clothes. A second treatment may be necessary 7-10 days later (consult healthcare provider). There are milder treatments for pregnant women and small children.

### When is it OK to return to school?

A child may return to school 24 hours after prescribed treatment by a physician and bring note from physician. Itching may continue for a couple weeks after treatment and is NOT a sign that treatment needs to be repeated.

**Other Important Information**

- Pets do not carry human scabies.
- Very important to prevent re-infestation! After treatment, wash clothes worn recently (2-3 days before treatment), towels and bedding in hot water and dry on the hot cycle.
- Vacuum carpeting and furniture.

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact an Allegan County Public Health Nurse at 269-673-5411.