



Symptoms, Causes, and Effective Treatment Options for Scabies

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DESCRIPTION

Scabies is a highly contagious skin disease caused by a tiny mite called *Sarcoptes scabiei* which is a microscopic eight-legged parasite. It can affect people of all ages, genders, and races, but it is more common in crowded living conditions, such as prisons, nursing homes, and refugee camps. The mite is spread through close, prolonged skin-to-skin contact with an infested person, and can also be spread through sharing of personal items such as clothing, towels, and bedding. The mite can survive for up to 72 hours on clothing and bedding, which can contribute to its spread. Once the mites burrow into the skin, they lay eggs, which hatch in a few days, and the larvae grow into adult mites. The infestation can cause intense itching, especially at night, and the scratching can lead to skin damage and secondary infections. The symptoms of scabies typically begin two to six weeks after exposure to the mites. Itching is caused by the body's allergic reaction to the mites, their eggs, and their waste products. Other symptoms include small, raised bumps or blisters on the skin, especially in the folds of the skin, such as between the fingers, on the wrists, elbows, armpits, around the waist, and on the buttocks. In severe cases, the entire body can become covered in a rash. The diagnosis of scabies is typically made by a healthcare provider who examines the skin and looks for signs of the mites or their eggs. A skin scraping may be taken to confirm the diagnosis. If scabies is suspected, it is important to seek medical treatment as soon as possible to prevent the spread of the disease. In rare cases, scabies in infants can lead to a severe form of the disease known as crusted scabies, which can cause thick crusts of skin to form and can be more difficult to treat. Older

adults may be more susceptible to scabies because of weakened immune systems. Itching and discomfort can be particularly distressing for older adults, who may have more difficulty managing these symptoms.

Scabies can lead to secondary bacterial infections, such as cellulitis, which can be particularly dangerous for older adults.

The treatment of scabies involves the use of topical medications, such as permethrin cream, benzyl benzoate lotion, or sulfur ointment, which are applied to the skin to kill the mites and their eggs. These medications are usually applied to the entire body from the neck down and left on for 8-12 hours before being washed off. It may also be necessary to treat close contacts, such as family members and sexual partners, even if they do not have symptoms. In rare cases, oral medications, such as ivermectin, may be prescribed for the treatment of scabies. This medication is usually reserved for people who have a severe infestation or who have not responded to other treatments. Prevention is a key when it comes to scabies. It is important to maintain good personal hygiene, such as washing hands frequently and taking regular showers or baths. Severe itching can be managed with antihistamines such as diphenhydramine or hydroxyzine.

To prevent reinfection, all clothing, bedding, and towels should be washed in hot water and dried on high heat. Vacuuming furniture, carpets, and floors is also recommended. It is important to follow all instructions provided by the healthcare provider and to complete the full course of treatment, even if symptoms improve before the treatment is complete.

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