

# Scabies

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Scabies is an infestation of small mites that burrow under the skin. Scabies can be spread through sex and other skin-to-skin contact. It can also be spread through contact with clothing, towels and bedding of someone with scabies. Humans are not at risk of contracting scabies mites from an animal or vice versa.

## Symptoms

- Intense itching, usually around the folds of the skin (such as wrists, arms, elbows, knees, genitals, between fingers, around waist, between buttocks or under arms)
  - Itching is usually worse at night.
- Red patches, pimples, bumps, rash, blisters, and short, dark lines across the skin

# Prevention

To reduce your chance of infestation with scabies:

- Avoid physical contact with someone who has recently been diagnosed with scabies.
- Wear clean clothes and do not share clothes or towels with others.
- Frequently wash bedding and towels.
- Vacuum all carpets and upholstered furniture.

# Testing

Your health care provider will test for scabies by applying mineral oil to your skin, scraping the skin and examining the sample under a microscope.

# Treatment

Your health care provider will prescribe medicated lotion that can cure scabies. The lotion is typically left on the body for eight to 14 hours and then washed off.

Clothing, bedding and towels should be machine-washed and dried on a hot cycle. Any other items that cannot be washed should be sealed in a plastic bag for at least 72 hours.

## **Why Get Treatment**

If left untreated, the area will continue to itch. Repeated scratching of the infested area can result in other serious skin infections.

## **Sex Partners and Household Members**

Your sex and intimate partners from the past six weeks also need to be examined and treated so they do not reinfest you or pass on the infestation to others. Household members (including children) should also be treated, even if they do not have symptoms.

# Scabies and Pregnancy

We do not know of any serious effects of having scabies during pregnancy. Some medicated lotions used to treat scabies could be dangerous to the fetus, so you should tell your health care provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding when you seek treatment for scabies.

New York City Sexual Health Clinics provide confidential, low- to no-cost services including STI and HIV testing.

To find a clinic, visit **[nyc.gov/health/clinics](https://nyc.gov/health/clinics)**.

