

Scabies and Hotels

Scabies are mites that infect humans. The mites burrow under the epidermal layer of the skin, causing itching and rash. Human scabies is almost always caught from another person through close contact. Attracted to warmth and odor, the female mite burrows into the skin, lays eggs, and produces toxins that cause allergic reactions. Newly hatched mites travel to the skin surface, lying in shallow pockets where they will develop into adult mites. If the mite is scratched off the skin, it can live in bedding for up to 24 hours or more.

How are people infected by scabies?

Scabies is acquired through close, skin-to-skin, prolonged human contact. It may be spread through sexual contact. Symptomatic individuals may not show signs of infection for 2-6 weeks, furthering the likelihood that they may transfer the infestation to others.

Where do scabies epidemic infestations occur?

Institutions such as nursing homes, prisons, and child care centers are examples of group living facilities where scabies infestations can proliferate. Scabies is most common in those who have close physical contact with others, particularly children, mothers of young children, sexually active young adults, and elderly people in nursing homes.

Did I get scabies in my hotel room?

Scabies transmission can occur via prolonged contact with bed linen, clothing, and other fabrics from infested hosts. The mites are able to survive 2-3 days at room temperatures when the relative humidity is more than 30%; the higher the relative humidity, the higher the survival rate. Immature scabies mites can infest fomites (inanimate objects that may be contaminated with infectious organisms and serve in their transmission), although indirect transfer from fomites is not common and usually only occurs if fomites are contaminated by infested hosts immediately beforehand.

Fomites will play little, if any, role in the transmission of scabies if the infestation is typical. However, if the infestation has progressed to the crusted stage, the environment may harbor mites and contribute to transmission.

Crusted scabies (Norwegian Scabies)

While scabies is commonly spread through prolonged skin contact, crusted scabies is much more contagious. This form of scabies is marked by very large mite infestations on the human host, numbering in the thousands. At this volume, the mites are very easily spread from one person to the next with simple human activity and movement throughout a home or facility. Crusted scabies generally occurs in people who are elderly or immuno-compromised.

How can I remove scabies mites from a room, bedding, or carpet?

Scabies mites do not survive more than 2-3 days away from human skin. Items such as bedding, clothing, and towels used by a person with scabies can be decontaminated by machine-washing in hot water and drying using the hot cycle or by dry-cleaning. Items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned can be decontaminated by removing from any body contact for at least 72 hours.

Because persons with crusted scabies are considered very infectious, careful vacuuming of furniture and carpets in rooms used by these persons is recommended.

Fumigation of living areas is unnecessary.

For more info go to:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/epidemiology/zoonoticvector-borneinfestations/infestations>