

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

Scabies is a common condition that is found throughout the world. It can affect people of all ages and all social and income levels.

(The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.org)

Q. I hope you can provide me with some insight. I recently developed a rash in my genital area. I searched online for answers and think that I may have scabies. Can you point me in the direction of where to have this checked and treated if necessary?

A. Scabies is a very itchy skin irritation caused by tiny mites that burrow just beneath the skin's surface. Infestation frequently occurs through prolonged, direct, skin-to-skin contact with a person who is already infested. Scabies is not necessarily a sexually transmitted disease (STD), but it can transfer between sexual partners. It can also be transmitted among household members through sharing towels, bedding, clothing, and other personal or household items.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.org) describes the signs and symptoms of scabies as:

- Pimple-like irritations, burrows, or rash of the skin, especially:
 - Between the webbing of fingers
 - On the skin folds of the wrists, elbows, or knees
 - Around the waistline, navel, or shoulder blades
 - On the genitals (in men)
 - Around the breasts, nipples, or bra line (in women)
- Intense itching, usually worse at night
- Sores on the body caused by scratching.

Note: First time infestations can take 4-6 weeks before symptoms are noticed.

A prescription lotion or cream is used as the treatment medication for scabies. Over-the-counter products are available, however they are not strong enough to kill the mites and their eggs. If you do have scabies, you and other individuals, such as sexual partners or roommates, need to receive treatment at the same time. This prevents passing the infestation back and forth. In addition to treatment, your health care professional will instruct you to wash all clothing and bedding after using the prescribed medication.

Since scabies does not go away on its own, it is necessary to seek diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible if you have these symptoms. You can schedule an appointment with Campus Health by calling 621-9202.

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Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu



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