



Scabies

Scabies are tiny mites that can get on your skin. The insects are invisible to the eye and burrow into the top layer of the skin where they lay their eggs. In a few weeks, the eggs hatch and move over the surface of the skin causing an itchy rash.

Scabies can easily spread to other people by direct contact. That's why you will often find lots of people infected in places where there is frequent person-to-person contact, such as schools, childcare centers, and nursing homes. Scabies are not sexually transmitted diseases and are not spread by pets. They cannot be washed off and require appropriate treatment.

What are the signs?

Scabies are found between the fingers, toes, and in the folds of skin. Since they are so small, the first thing you'll notice is an itchy, red rash. A doctor or nurse practitioner (NP) must diagnose scabies. Call Kaiser Permanente if you suspect that you or your child has scabies.

Is there a cure?

Yes. Your doctor or NP can prescribe medication, and you can be cured quickly—if you follow all of the instructions. However, do not use the medication for longer than recommended.

Medication

1. Apply the prescribed lotion over your entire body, from the neck down. Make sure that your skin is

cool and dry, and then apply the lotion between your fingers, toes, groin area, and other folds of skin. Leave on overnight.

2. For infants and young children, also apply to the face and scalp. However, don't put the lotion in their eyes or mouth.
3. In the morning, wash off all of the lotion with soap and water.
4. The itching and rash can last for two to four weeks after treatment. Try taking cool baths without using soap. You can also try applying hydrocortisone cream to the itchy area.
5. If you're pregnant, ask your doctor or NP for more information. Pregnant women often need special medication.
6. For severe rashes, repeat this treatment one week later.

How do you prevent scabies from returning?

- Machine wash and dry linens, towels, cloth toys, and any clothes worn during the previous week. Use hot water.
- Vacuum items, such as furniture, mattresses, and car seats.
- Put items that you do not want to be washed in the dryer for 30 minutes or place them in an airtight bag for 10 days.
- Treat everyone who has had close contact (family, friends) with the person who has scabies.
- It is OK to send your child back to school after treatment.

Head lice

Head lice are small, gray bugs that can get on anyone. These common insects live on the scalp and lay eggs that attach to the hair. You can catch lice from another person with head-to-head contact or by sharing items (such as bedding, hats, combs, or other hair accessories). That's why you will often find lots of people infected in places where there is frequent person-to-person contact, such as schools, childcare centers, and nursing homes. Lice are not spread by pets. They do not go away after washing the hair and require appropriate treatment.

What are the signs?

Since lice move quickly and are difficult to see, the first thing you'll notice is itching and a rash on the back of the neck and scalp.

- Nits (white eggs) can be found attached to the hair. If you look closely, there are usually lots of them. They are easier to see than the actual lice.
- If you are checking your child for lice, have him or her sit under a bright light looking down (chin on chest) while you examine the scalp. They are usually found at the nape of the neck or behind the ears, within a 1/4 inch of the scalp.

Is there a cure?

Yes. Head lice can be diagnosed and treated at home. Many medications can even be bought over-the-counter and can lead to a quick cure—if you follow all of the instructions. However, do not use the medication for longer than recommended.

Medication

1. Available products for lice include Nix Cream Rinse, Rid, and Ovide.
2. Apply medicated shampoo as directed. Most of these shampoos must be used on dry hair.
3. Afterwards, rinse well over a sink and then dry the hair. (You should not use a blow dryer with some medications. Towel dry your hair instead.)
4. Remove nits manually by combing the hair with a fine-toothed comb in the opposite direction from how you normally comb your hair. Some nits may have to be pulled or cut out of the hair individually.
5. Routine re-treatment is recommended for some medications. Repeat the application in about 9 days.
6. If lice are found in the eyelashes, put petroleum jelly on the eyelashes twice a day for eight days.

How do you prevent lice from returning?

Properly treating your home and belongings can help remove any lasting insects or eggs.

- Machine wash and dry linens, towels, cloth toys, and any clothes worn or used in the past 48 hours. Use hot water.
- Vacuum items such as furniture, mattresses, and car seats.
- Disinfect combs and brushes by soaking them in hot, soapy water for 10 minutes.
- Items that can't be washed can be sealed in an airtight plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- Treat everyone in close contact (family, friends) to the person with lice. Treatment is only needed for those who have scalp rashes, itching, or live lice.
- It is OK to send your child back to school after treatment.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.