



## Health Alert Network Advisory

Kanawha-Charleston Health Department  
108 Lee Street, East – Charleston, WV 25301

Phone: (304) 348-1088

Fax: (304) 348-8149

[www.kchdww.org](http://www.kchdww.org)

DATE: January 11, 2011

TO: Kanawha County Medical Providers

FROM: Kanawha-Charleston Health Department

RE: Outbreak of Scabies

Outbreaks of scabies have recently been reported within Kanawha County. The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department (KCHD) requests that medical providers consider the diagnosis of scabies when evaluating patients with rash illnesses. Suspected cases of scabies should be evaluated for infestation and treated with an appropriate scabicide. Additional diagnostic tests include skin scraping or microscopic evaluation. Scabies is highly contagious and infested persons may spread mites for up to 6 weeks before becoming symptomatic. All household members and other potentially exposed persons should be treated at the same time as the infested person to prevent possible re-exposure and re-infestation.

**\*\*REPORTING REMINDER:** Individual cases of scabies are **not** reportable to the health department; however, any suspected outbreaks must be reported to the county health department immediately. In an institutional setting such as a school, daycare, or medical facility a scabies outbreak is defined as 2 or more consecutive cases of scabies within a 4-6 week period. \*\*

### **General Information**

Human scabies is caused by an infestation of the skin by the human itch mite (*Sarcoptes scabiei* var. *hominis*). The microscopic scabies mite burrows into the upper layer of the skin where it lives and lays its eggs. The most common symptoms of scabies are intense itching and a pimple-like rash. The scabies mite is usually spread by direct, prolonged, skin-to-skin contact with a person who has scabies. Scabies occurs worldwide and affects people from all socioeconomic levels, without regard to standards of personal hygiene. Scabies can spread rapidly under conditions where close body contact is frequent. Institutions such as nursing homes, extended-care facilities, and prisons are often sites of scabies outbreaks. When a person is infested with scabies mites the first time, symptoms may not appear for 4 – 6 weeks after being infected; however, an infected person still can spread scabies during this time even though he/she does not have symptoms. If a person has had scabies before, symptoms appear much sooner (1-4 days) after exposure.

### **Diagnosis and Treatment**

Diagnosis of a scabies infestation usually is made based upon the customary appearance and distribution of the rash and the presence of burrows; burrows appear as tiny raised and crooked grayish-white or skin-colored lines. Whenever possible, the diagnosis of scabies should be confirmed by identifying the mite or mite eggs or fecal matter. This can be done by carefully removing the mite from the end of its burrow using the tip of a needle or by obtaining a skin scraping to examine under a microscope for mites, eggs, or mite fecal matter. However, a person can still be infested even if mites, eggs, or fecal matter cannot be found.

Products used to kill scabies mites are called scabicides. **No “over-the-counter” products have been approved to treat human scabies.** The following medications are recommended for the treatment of scabies: Permethrin cream 5%, Crotamiton lotion (or cream) 10%, or oral Ivermectin. The CDC and the AAP recommend permethrin cream 5% as the drug of choice. For more information on treatment check the CDC guidelines at: [http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/health\\_professionals/meds.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/health_professionals/meds.html).

Because scabies is highly infectious and infested persons may transmit before becoming symptomatic, household members and sexual contacts of cases should be given preventive scabicide. All household members and other potentially exposed persons should be treated at the same time as the infested person to prevent possible re-exposure and re-infestation. Bedding, clothing, and towels used by infested persons or their household, sexual, and close contacts anytime during the three days before treatment should be decontaminated by washing in hot water and drying in a hot dryer, by dry-cleaning, or by sealing in a plastic bag for at least 72 hours. Scabies mites generally do not survive more than 2 to 3 days away from human skin. Use of insecticide sprays and fumigants is not recommended.

#### **For Further Information and Reporting**

Contact the KCHD Division of Epidemiology with additional questions at (304) 348-1088. Thank you for your assistance.