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## HEALTH OFFICIALS INVESTIGATE A CASE OF SCABIES IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA



**Contact:**

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**Pensacola, Fla.** – At least one case of scabies has been recently-diagnosed in a resident of Escambia County, Florida. The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County advises residents to contact their physician if they suspect themselves to have scabies.

Scabies is an infestation of the skin by the human itch mite. Scabies is found worldwide and affects people of all races and social classes. Scabies can spread rapidly under crowded conditions where close body and skin contact is frequent. Institutions such as nursing homes, extended-care facilities, and prisons are often sites of scabies outbreaks. Child care facilities also are a common site of scabies infestations. Scabies mites are too small to be seen with the naked eye and are usually spread by direct, prolonged, skin-to-skin contact with a person who has scabies.

The most common symptoms of scabies are intense itching and a pimple-like skin rash. Symptoms of scabies infestation may take up to six weeks to appear, however, an infested person can spread scabies even before they experience any itching or rash. The itching and rash may affect a person's entire body or may be limited to one or more areas or body parts. The rash also can include tiny blisters and scales. Scratching the rash can cause skin sores; sometimes these sores become infected by bacteria. A less-common symptom may be tiny raised and crooked grayish-white or skin-colored lines on the skin surface, made when the mites tunnel just beneath the skin.

A more severe form of the infestation, that can occur in persons with poor immune function, is Norwegian (also called crusted) scabies. This more-contagious version of scabies causes thick crusts of skin to appear on the infested individual. These thick crusts of skin contain large numbers of mites and eggs which are very easily spread by both by direct skin-to-skin contact and by contamination of items such as their clothing, bedding, and furniture. Persons with crusted scabies should receive quick and aggressive medical treatment for their infestation both to minimize their personal risk for bacterial infections and to prevent outbreaks of scabies.

A person who thinks they might have scabies should contact a doctor. The doctor can examine the person, confirm the diagnosis of scabies, and prescribe an appropriate treatment. Products used to treat scabies in humans are available only with a doctor's prescription. Anyone who is diagnosed with scabies, as well as his or her sexual partners and other contacts who have had prolonged skin-to-skin contact with the infested person, should be treated. Treatment is recommended for members of the same household as the person with scabies, particularly those persons who have had prolonged skin-to-skin contact with the infested person. All persons should be treated at the same time to prevent reinfestation.

More information about scabies can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies>.

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