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To: Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Home Health Agencies, Local Health Departments
in New York State Western Region

From: NYSDOH

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HEALTH ADVISORY: Scabies in Healthcare Settings

Please distribute to physicians, physician assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners in private practices, home care agency administrators, facility staff in the Departments of Emergency Medicine, Primary Care, Dermatology, Infectious Disease, Infection Prevention and Control, Epidemiology, Laboratory Medicine, Medical Directors, Nursing Home Administrators, Directors of Nursing, Employee Health, and Environmental Services.

The purpose of this Health Advisory is to recommend maintaining a heightened index of suspicion for scabies in individuals presenting with an undiagnosed skin rash even if characteristic signs or symptoms of scabies are absent.

Summary:

- A case of crusted scabies was recently identified in a Niagara County healthcare facility.
- Additional cases of scabies have been identified among individuals at two other healthcare facilities following contact with the index case.
- Control measures have been implemented in seven facilities.
- The time from the index patient's rash onset to diagnosis was prolonged, and during this period, the index patient had a substantial number of healthcare facility and community provider encounters.
- Crusted scabies is highly transmissible due to the large numbers of scabies mites and eggs present.
- NYSDOH recommends that providers and healthcare settings maintain a heightened index of suspicion when assessing patients with skin rashes and conditions that may be consistent with scabies infestation.
- Laboratory diagnosis of scabies should be obtained from skin scrapings of symptomatic individuals whenever possible.
- Please contact the NYSDOH Western Regional office at 585-423-8076 if you identify a suspect or confirmed case of scabies.

An individual with crusted scabies was identified in a Niagara County healthcare facility. The NYSDOH investigation has identified additional cases of scabies among contacts to the index case in two healthcare facilities. Control measures have been implemented in a total of seven healthcare facilities. The investigation has determined that the time from the index case's rash onset to diagnosis was prolonged (approximately seven months) and that the index case had a substantial number of contacts with both community providers and healthcare facilities while symptomatic. For these reasons, the NYSDOH recommends that providers and healthcare

facilities, especially those in Niagara, Orleans, Erie, and Genesee counties, maintain a heightened awareness for scabies infestations among patients, residents, and staff. Patients with crusted scabies should receive quick and aggressive medical treatment for their infestation because of the risk of complications and to prevent transmission to others.

Crusted scabies (formerly known as Norwegian scabies) typically presents with hyperkeratotic plaques that may be fissured and can have associated erythema. Patients with crusted scabies may not show the usual signs, symptoms, or lesion distribution seen in classic scabies. Patients may not have the characteristic rash, and pruritus (itching) may be mild or absent. Large numbers of scabies mites and eggs—up to two million—may be present on a single patient.

Laboratory diagnosis of scabies should be obtained whenever possible to identify mites, eggs, or feces from skin scrapings of symptomatic individuals. Providers and healthcare facilities should ensure a trained and experienced staff member can obtain and examine skin scrapings to identify scabies mites. Consider establishing working relationships with a local dermatologist or other provider who performs skin scrapings and/or determine the feasibility of developing on-site capacity to collect skin scrapings for laboratory identification.

Detailed information regarding identification and control of scabies is available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](#).

NYS Article 28 hospitals, diagnostic and treatment centers, and nursing homes must report outbreaks of scabies to the NYSDOH by contacting their [regional epidemiologist](#). Article 28 hospitals and nursing homes must report using the [Nosocomial Outbreak Reporting Application \(NORA\)](#) available on the NYSDOH Health Commerce System. Other healthcare settings should report outbreaks of scabies to their [local health department](#).

For additional assistance, contact the NYSDOH Western Regional Office at 585-423-8076.

Links:

- CDC About Scabies:
<https://www.cdc.gov/scabies/about/index.html#:~:text=Scabies%20is%20an%20infestation%20of,Anyone%20can%20get%20scabies>
- NYSDOH Contacts Regional Health Departments:
https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/diseases/reporting/communicable/infection/regional_epi_staff
- NYSDOH Nosocomial Outbreak: Reporting:
https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/diseases/reporting/communicable/infection/98-07-16_nosocomial_outbreak_reporting.htm
- NYSDOH: County Health Departments:
https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/