

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COMMON CUTANEOUS PARASITES

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## What are common cutaneous parasites?

Scabies, bedbugs, lice, and fleas are common parasites that can infest human skin.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- *Scabies*. Small itchy bumps usually on hands and wrists but also on elbows, knees, penis, breasts, or shoulder blades.
- *Bedbugs*. Small pink or crusted bumps, often in groups of 3 or 4. Bumps most often appear on skin not covered by clothing at bedtime, such as forearms, neck, and ankles.
- *Lice*. Itching on the scalp (head lice), in the groin (pubic lice), or on the body between the shoulders and at knees (body lice). Lice appear as tiny white dots attached to hairs or sometimes on the skin surface.
- *Fleas*. Itchy, crusted bumps on exposed skin, such as ankles and forearms.



## How are they diagnosed?

- Scabies can be diagnosed when a doctor takes a small sample of skin in an area affected with bumps and finds mites or eggs after examining the sample under a microscope.
- Bedbugs do not live on the skin and are usually not found during an examination. They are found in the home when the bedding, headboard, and base of bed are checked.
- Lice can be identified when a doctor examines the scalp, often with the help of a magnifying glass.

- Fleas are not typically found on the skin during an examination. The diagnosis is usually made after a discussion of the patient's history of exposure to animals.

## How are they treated?

- Scabies can be treated with antiparasitic creams.
- Bedbugs and fleas are treated with creams or pills to decrease itching. These infestations are best eradicated by exterminating the home.
- Lice can be treated by shaving all hair; creams and wet combs can be used to remove head lice. In addition to shaving, pubic lice can be treated with antiparasitic creams.

## For More Information

[www2.epa.gov/bedbugs/top-ten-tips-prevent-or-control-bed-bugs](http://www2.epa.gov/bedbugs/top-ten-tips-prevent-or-control-bed-bugs)  
Tips on preventing and controlling bedbugs from the Environmental Protection Agency.

[www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/q---t/scabies/tips](http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/q---t/scabies/tips)  
Tips for managing scabies from the American Academy of Dermatology.

[www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/e---h/head-lice/tips](http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/e---h/head-lice/tips)  
Tips for preventing head lice from the American Academy of Dermatology.

