

You can get further advice and information by:

- Asking your Doctor or Healthcare Professional

Other sources of information about health and health care:

- **Public Health England** works with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation's health and support healthier choices.
Website: www.gov.uk/phe
- **NHS Choices** is the online 'front door' to the NHS. It is the country's biggest health website and gives all the information you need to make choices about your health.
Website: www.nhs.uk

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Infection Prevention and Control

Scabies



Magnified view of a scabies mite

Information Leaflet



What is scabies?

Scabies is common and anyone can get it, it is not usually a serious condition but it does need to be treated. Scabies is an **allergic** response to the excreta and saliva of a mite that burrows under the skin. The mite is **NOT** visible to the naked eye. Scabies can affect people of all ages.

Site of infection

Scabies burrows can occur anywhere on the body but are mainly seen on hands and arms, and particularly between the fingers and around the wrist. Occasionally they are found on the genitals in men or female breasts.

Signs of infection

The allergic response produces a widespread rash which is intensely itchy, more so at night. There may be small, raised pimples and patches of crusty skin.

The sites of the rash may not correspond to the sites of the burrows.

Distribution of the rash is characteristic, elbows, armpits, beneath breast, waist, groin, genitalia, buttocks, knees and ankles. In the very young other areas which may be affected include face, scalp, palms of hands and soles of feet.

It always affects both sides of the body alike giving a symmetrical pattern but may not appear in all these sites at once.

Transmission

Scabies can spread easily; transmission is by direct, skin to skin contact with another person.

The mites can live away from a host for an average of 24–36 hours but this can be up to 7 days, survival can be prolonged at lower ambient temperature and higher humidity. Transmission via shared clothing or bedding can therefore occur.

Treatment

Treatment consists of applying a scabicide preparation to the skin. A number of creams/lotions are available – ask your GP or local Pharmacist for advice.

Preventing the spread of infection

Since the symptoms of scabies can take several weeks to appear, it is easy for close contacts to become infected before the disease is known. Therefore, anyone who is in close contact with the first patient should also be treated once with a scabicide preparation in case they too pass scabies on to someone else.

These contacts will need one treatment whether they are itching or not.

No special precautions need to be taken with used clothing and bed linen - hot cycle in a washing machine is sufficient.

- A hot bath or shower is NOT recommended before treatment, as the skin must be dry and cool before cream is applied.
- It is important to apply the cream to cover all skin in the webs between the fingers, toes, and also the buttocks, groin and genital area.
- Apply the recommended cream/lotion gently over the skin to cover the whole body from the hair line to the toes; apply to the scalp if the hair line is thinning.
- Apply behind ears.
- Ensure cream goes under nails – a cotton bud may assist with this.
- The cream must be re-applied to the hands after handwashing or to sacrum after nappy changing and changing of incontinence pads.
- Leave the treatment on for 8 - 24 hours depending on manufacturer's instructions.
- The day after treatment a bath or shower should be taken to remove traces of cream/lotion.
- **Those who had a rash/itching will need to repeat treatment one week later.**
- Itching may persist for two-three weeks after the successful treatment, but it can be treated with a soothing lotion such as calamine. If symptoms persist, please see your GP.
- The person may return to work, school or nursery after the first treatment has been carried out.