



Scabies

What is scabies?

Scabies is an infectious skin condition that causes intense itching. It is caused by tiny mites called *sarcoptes scabiei* which burrow into the skin.

Is it infectious?

Yes. It is transmitted by skin to skin contact in a warm environment e.g. in bed or by holding hands. The scabies mite does not survive for long outside the human body, so it is unlikely to be caught from bedclothes. It is unable to jump from person to person.

Where are the sites of infection?



The mites burrows can often be seen as light brown or silvery wavy lines that usually appear on the hands (finger webs), inner wrists, elbow creases, under the armpits, and around the umbilicus (belly button), the nipples in adult females and the genitalia in men.

What is the incubation period?

An incubation period is the time when someone has the infection but is not displaying symptoms. Scabies symptoms start from several days to about six weeks after contact with an infected person.



What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of the scabies are caused by the allergic response to the excreta and saliva of a parasitic mite.

- Itchy red rash
- Rash is usually seen on the fingers, hands, wrists, waist, groin, umbilicus, buttocks and sole of feet. (Breasts of females and male genitalia).
- The rash is usually symmetrical (seen on both sides of the body).
- Itching is more common at night time.
- In some cases you may not have symptoms, but may have been told by a healthcare professional that you have been in contact with a person with scabies.

How is scabies spread?

Spread of scabies is by direct, prolonged skin to skin contact with an infected person. Scabies does not usually spread by casual contact such as shaking hands or brushing against people in a crowd.

Mites never leave the body because they die if they are not kept warm and moist.

Spread from clothing or linen is unlikely as the mite dies quickly when outside of its burrow. It is **not** a condition caused by poor hygiene. It is **not** usually spread by clothes, bedding or towels.



Is there any treatment?

Yes. You can get scabies lotion from your chemist or obtain a prescription from your GP. These lotions need to be painted on the whole of the body, including the face and head. When applying treatment to the face it is important to avoid the eyes and mouth.

Particular attention should be paid to the toes, fingers and genitalia. These treatments must be applied as per instructions on the container.

Most treatments should be left on for 24 hours before being washed off. It is best to apply the treatment before going to bed. Lotions need to be applied twice, with the second coat seven days after the first. If you are not sure of the diagnosis, see your GP.

The treatment should **not** be applied after a hot bath. The treatments are safe but anyone with eczema, epilepsy or who is pregnant should consult their own GP. Remember also that itching can continue for up to two weeks after the treatment has been applied. Bedding, clothing etc. is unlikely to be infectious with scabies but should be washed immediately following treatment in the normal manner.

Who should be treated?

Anyone who has intimate skin-to-skin contact with someone with scabies for more than 10 minutes should be treated, even if they have no symptoms. Always seek advice from your GP.

How long should you stay off work?

You should go back the day after you have been treated.

Test your knowledge		
Please tick the correct answer	True	False
1. Scabies are transmitted by skin to skin contact in a warm environment.		
2. Everyone that has intimate skin to skin contact with someone with scabies for more than 10 minutes will need treatment.		
3. You should go back to work the day after you have been treated.		

Remember:

- Scabies is an infectious skin condition that causes intensive itching.
- Scabies is transmitted by prolong skin to skin contact in a warm environment.
- Treatment should not be used after a hot bath.
- You should go back to work the day after you have been treated.

Factsheet Activity <i>Please tick appropriate box when activity has been completed</i>	
Check that your healthcare setting has information for service users and staff regarding Scabies.	
Check colleagues are aware that service users have been treated and everyone else that has had prolonged skin to skin contact.	
Check colleagues should be aware that after treatment they can return to work.	