
SAY NO TO INFECTION

Fact Sheet

Suspected/confirmed Scabies

What is Scabies?

Scabies is a contagious skin condition caused by tiny mites that burrow into the skin. Scabies mites are called “Sarcoptes Scabiei”. The mites use their mouths and front legs to burrow into the outer layer of skin (epidermis), where they feed and lay their eggs.

After three to four days, the baby mites (larvae) hatch and move to the surface of the skin where they mature into adults.

What are the symptoms of Scabies?

The main symptom of scabies is intense itching that’s worse at night when the skin is warm. It also causes a skin rash on areas where the mites have burrowed. It may take four to six weeks before the itching starts. This is because the itching is caused by the body’s allergic response to the faeces and saliva of the mite and it can take up to six weeks for this reaction to occur in people who have never previously had scabies. This is known as the incubation period. People who have had scabies before will often display these symptoms earlier, within 2-3 weeks if they have contact with an infected person and go on to develop this infestation again.

What does Scabies look like?

The mite itself is microscopic and therefore not able to be seen with the naked eye. The scabies rash consists of tiny red spots. Scratching the rash may cause crusty sores to develop. Burrow marks can be found anywhere on the body. They’re usually short (approximately 1cm or less), wavy, silver-coloured lines on the skin, with a black dot at one end that can be seen with a magnifying glass.

In adults, burrow marks often appear in the following areas:

- the folds of skin between fingers and toes
- the palms of the hands
- the soles and sides of the feet
- the wrists or the elbows
- around the nipples (in women)
- around the genital area (in men)



The rash usually affects the whole of the body, apart from the scalp in those with hair. In particular the following areas are often affected:

- under the arms
- around the waist
- the inside of the elbow
- the lower buttocks
- the lower legs
- the soles of the feet
- the knees
- the shoulder blades
- the female genital area and the groins
- around the ankles



How does Scabies spread?

Scabies mites can't fly or jump, which means they can only move from one human body to another through prolonged periods of skin-to-skin contact with an infected person.

Examples of how scabies mites can be transmitted are:

- holding hands with an infected person for a prolonged period of time
- having sex with an infected person
- sharing clothing, towels and bedding with an infected person (although this is rare see below)

It's also possible, but rare, for scabies to be passed on by sharing clothing, towels and bedding with someone who is infected as the scabies mite can survive for 24-36 hours outside the human body.

It's unlikely that scabies will be transmitted through brief physical contact, such as shaking hands or hugging.

Scabies infestations can spread quickly because people are usually unaware they have the condition until several weeks after the initial infection.

There's an increased risk of catching scabies in confined environments, such as schools and nursing homes, where people are in close proximity to one another.

How is Scabies treated?

Lotions and creams are commonly used to treat scabies. The client's GP or Public Health England (PHE) will be able to advise you about which treatment to use. To prevent reinfection, any close contacts should be treated at the same time as the infected person even if they don't have any symptoms. Two treatments are usually required, see manufactures instructions.

For additional guidance on anything relating to 'Say No To Infection' please visit www.coventryrugbyccg.nhs.uk and search for 'Say No To Infection'.