

Scabies

Scabies is where tiny mites dig into your skin. It can spread easily from person to person.

Scabies can be very itchy. The itching is worse at night. Your child might also get a skin rash.

Scabies like warm places, like between the fingers, under fingernails, or around the bottom. They can also hide under watch straps, bracelets or rings.

How scabies is spread

Scabies is usually spread through skin contact.

It is also possible – but rare – for scabies to be passed on by sharing clothing, towels and bedding.

It can take up to eight weeks for the symptoms of scabies to appear after you have caught them.

Scabies is most common in places where there are lots of people, like schools, nurseries and care homes. It is often seen in winter, as people spend more time indoors and are closer together.

Treating scabies

Visit your GP as soon as possible if you think your child has scabies. It is not usually serious, but it does need to be treated. Waiting for treatment puts other people at risk as the mites are more likely to spread.

- The most common treatments for scabies are permethrin cream and malathion lotion. Both treatments kill the scabies mite. Your doctor or pharmacist will advise you how to use it. The cream or lotion will need to be put on again seven days after the first application to make sure it works.
- Contact your GP if the itching has not improved after two weeks of treatment and you notice new marks on your skin. It can take a month after treatment for the itching to go away completely,
- Everyone in your home and any close contacts should be treated at the same time, even if they do not have any symptoms.

Killing scabies mites

On the day you put on the cream or lotion, you should wash all bed linen, night clothes and towels. Make sure it is a hot wash. The temperature should be above 50 degrees Celsius or 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you are not able to wash some things, put them in a plastic bag for at least three days. After this time, the scabies mites will have died.

Avoid being close to other people until you have put on the cream or lotion. You should also avoid close contact with other people in your home until they have finished treatment. Children and adults can return to school or work after the first treatment has been completed.

Complications

Scratching can sometimes lead to a skin infection. If your skin becomes red and sore, or if you get blisters or crusts, then visit your GP.

There is a rare but more severe form of scabies called crusted scabies. This is where lots of mites are in the skin and you get thick crusts, which are like warts. You should visit your GP if your child has this. With crusted scabies you should also clean the floors in your house and vacuum your carpets and furniture, including the armchairs and sofa.