

Patient information

Scabies

What is scabies?

Scabies is a contagious skin condition caused by tiny mites which burrow into the skin. Scabies mites (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) are tiny, smaller than a pinhead and burrow into the outer layer of the skin where they lay their eggs. After 3-4 days the baby mites (larvae) hatch and move to the surface of the skin, where they mature into adults. Scabies like warm places such as skin folds and creases, between the fingers and under finger nails.

Signs and symptoms

The symptoms of scabies can take up to four weeks to appear. As the mites burrow they leave light brown lines on the skin most commonly between the fingers and toes and a rash of raised pinkish spots may appear. The main symptom is widespread itching which can be particularly severe at night.

How is scabies spread?

Scabies is spread from person to person by **close prolonged skin to skin contact** with an infected person, or when sleeping in the same bed as an infected person. It is **not** spread by **brief contact** such as shaking hands or by contact with clothing or bedding.

How is scabies diagnosed?

The diagnosis should be made by a doctor. Sometimes skin scrapings are taken by a dermatologist to be examined under a microscope.

How do you treat scabies?

The two most widely used treatments for scabies are Permethrin cream and Malathion 0.5% lotion. If you require treatment, this will be prescribed for you by your doctor. You will require two treatments seven days apart. The whole body must be treated including the scalp, neck, face and behind the ears.

Malathion should be used under medical supervision in children under 6 months of age. Permethrin should be used under medical supervision in children under two years old

There is no evidence that either treatment affects the foetus or gets into breast milk. However, the manufacturers of both treatments recommend that they are only used in pregnancy where absolutely necessary.

Complications of scabies

Scabies can sometimes lead to skin infections if your skin becomes irritated and inflamed.

Crusted scabies is a rare, but more severe form, of scabies where there are a large number of mites in the skin. This can develop in older people and those with a lowered immunity.

Infection Prevention precautions

If you are diagnosed with scabies we will transfer you to a single side room and commence scabies treatment. We normally apply the treatment at night and wash it off the following morning. The nurse and doctors looking after you will wear aprons and gloves when providing care.

General information

The treatment kills the scabies mites but until our own natural defence systems break down what is left of the mites the itch may continue for a further few weeks.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a member of the nursing staff. If you require further information, please ask the nursing staff to contact the Infection Prevention Team.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the disabledgo website link below:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>