

UASC Fact Sheet

Scabies

What is scabies

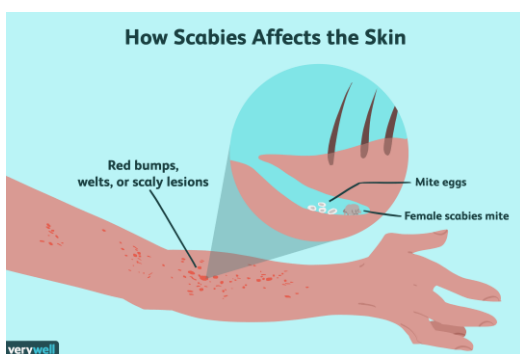
Scabies is a common and very itchy skin rash caused by a tiny mite called *Sarcoptes scabiei*. It persists indefinitely if left untreated but **it is curable if treated and is nothing to panic about.**

The mites that cause scabies are tiny parasites which are smaller than a pinhead. They are usually spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with someone who already has scabies and sometimes, but rarely, from shared clothing, towels or bedding. People affected by scabies have an average of about a 12- 15 adult mites on their skin; a few carry many more. Scabies isn't hereditary but it is common for groups in close proximity to have scabies at the same time. **Anyone can get scabies.**

Increased risk during winter months, probably due to increased crowding and prolonged survival of mites away from the host in cooler temperatures.

Rarely, a variant of scabies known as 'crusted scabies' (previously called Norwegian scabies) can occur in patients who have a poor immune system or suffer from other conditions, where there are thousands of scabies mites on the skin in this variant and it is therefore highly contagious. The treatment protocol is the same.

Scabies in animals called 'mange' is caused by a different type of mite and therefore cannot infect humans.



What are the symptoms of scabies?

Itching is the main symptom of scabies and it often gets worse at night. It can take about a month for the symptoms to appear after being infected by the mites. The itching can affect the whole body apart from the head and neck. It is common for several people in the same family, and their friends, to become itchy at roughly the same time.

The skin will often be red and sore, a red rash with burrows (fine wavy, grey or silvery lines). **This often appears between fingers, on the wrists, feet or underarm region.**

For more information on scabies and symptoms, watch the MEDSimplified video on [YouTube](#).

Treatment

The NHS website recommendation is to attend a pharmacist for treatment, rather than the GP but there are some exclusions which can be found at the [NHS Website](#).

You pay for treatment through a pharmacy, although this dosage may be weaker.

Always talk to a pharmacist if buying over the counter treatments.

After speaking to a pharmacist, you can get free treatment from a GP or walk-in centre if you register the young person. You can also call 111 and get a prescription.

NHS advice is that all close contacts need to be treated at the same time, even if they do not have symptoms. However, if seeing a GP, they will risk assess the need for treating others in the home and advise accordingly.

Use interpreters to explain the importance of treatment and how to apply treatment.

Apply treatment twice with applications one week apart. Permethrin 5% is the preferred treatment as per N.I.C.E. guidelines which suggest application to the **whole body** including scalp, neck, face (avoid the eyes), ears, genitalia, feet, back... everywhere (if assistance given, see safeguarding below). *This is where an interpreter can help explain the importance of covering the whole body and that the treatment will work.*

Ensure to include between fingers, toes and under nails (trim nails short and a cheap toothbrush can be useful to ensure no mites are under the nails.)



The Treatment Process

Apply the treatment to cool, dry skin after a warm (not hot) shower, covering the whole body (avoiding eyes). Best time is before bed.

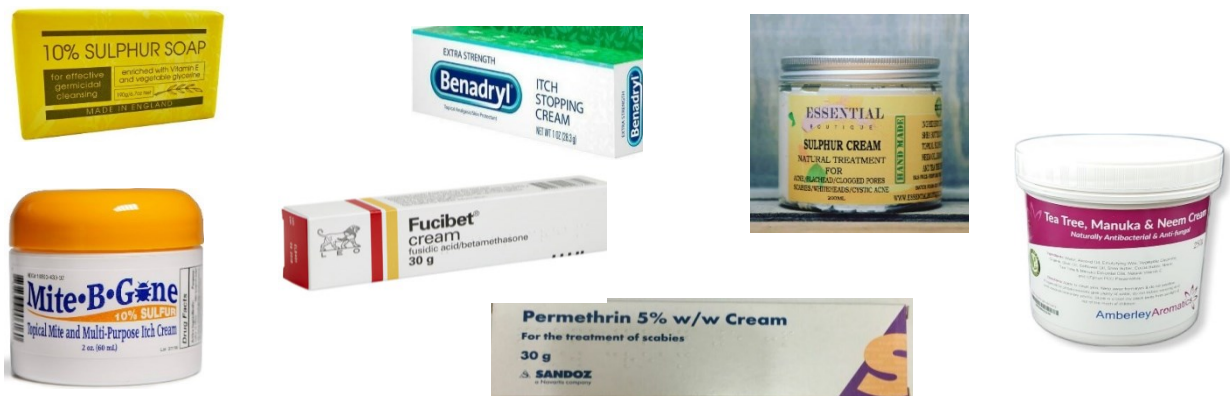
Allow the treatment to dry (roughly 30 minutes) before dressing in a completely fresh set of clothing.

The treatment must be left on for a full 12 hours. If a young person needs to wash within this 12 hour treatment period (e.g. Muslims who wash hands/feet/face for prayer, individuals with OCD), the treatment must be reapplied to the areas washed.

After the 12 hours, the young person should shower, be given a fresh towel (to be kept in their room) and the environment must now be treated (see below).

This whole process should be repeated after 7 days.

Even though the mites are now dead, the young person could still be itchy for up to a month; cream can be used, products containing tea tree are effective, like the Neem cream shown below. In addition to the cream, 10% sulphur soap can also be used (as shown), sulphur cream, Benadryl, caladryl, calamine, anti itch creams. If the itching is excessive or extreme, you can use Hydrocortisone cream which can be obtained from a GP or bought at a pharmacy.



Treating the environment

UKHSA advise that it is not necessary to fumigate living areas or furniture or treat pets, but you should thoroughly vacuum the floors and chairs and empty the vacuum into the outside bin.

The day after the treatment (after the young person has washed after their first application), wash all bed linen, clothes worn and towels at a temperature above 50 degrees. It is also recommended to use a mattress protector which can also be washed at this temperature.

Any items that cannot be washed can be placed in a plastic bag for at least 72 hours; after this time the scabies mites will have died.

Should your GP recommend that any areas of your house are treated Permethrin spray (e.g. indorex) should be used on any soft furnishings (mattress, carpet, prayer mat)

These actions should be repeated after 7 days.



Safeguarding

Care must be taken if assisting the young person with applying the treatment to their back or other areas due to physical impairment. It is not recommended to do this in their bedroom and any help provided should be clearly recorded in your diary notes and updated in your 'Safe Care Plan'.

Ideally, gloves should be worn.

Do you need to stay off work or school?

Once the correct cream/lotion has been used there is no need to stay off work or school (i.e. can return after the first application).

Do's and Don'ts

Don't

- Panic!
- Look horrified and put on a hazmat suit.
- Throw away mattresses.
- Keep towels in a communal space.

Do

- Follow the guidelines.
- Reassure the young person that it is very common, and not something to be frightened of and that they will still itch even after successful treatment.
- Use a mattress protector that can be washed at 50 degrees
- Ensure treatment applied to full body
- Repeat treatment after 7 days to kill hatched larvae
- Encourage healthy eating to boost immune system.
- Wash all clothes including hats and coats on arrival at 50 degrees.

Further Information

[NHS Website](#)

[NICE Website](#)

[UASC Health Website](#)