

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,
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**Worcestershire
Health and Care**
NHS Trust



SCABIES

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT IS IT?

Scabies is a skin infection, due to a parasitic mite, which leads to an allergic reaction in the body to the excreta and saliva of the mite.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The main symptom is itching which is often worse after a hot bath and in bed at night. There can also be a rash on the wrists, around the finger webs and toes, on the inner thighs and on the trunk, especially around the waist. The rash is usually symmetrical in appearance as it is due to an allergic reaction and not the presence of the mites. Sometimes there are small raised pimples or patches of crusty skin. The burrows of the mite, particularly those of the female which are larger, can sometimes be seen in the skin, on the sides and webs of both fingers and toes. In small children and the elderly the signs of infection may appear anywhere on the body.

IS IT INFECTIOUS?

YES. It is transmitted by skin to skin contact in a warm environment, eg when in bed or by holding hands. The scabies mite does not survive for long outside the human body, so you can not pick it up from bedding or the environment. Crusted scabies is a lot more infectious and specific advice relating to this condition should be obtained.

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

Scabies symptoms start from several days (in the case of re-infection) to about 6 weeks (on first exposure) after contact with an infected person.

IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

YES. A number of creams/lotions, which kill the Scabies mite are available. Your pharmacist or doctor can advise you on the right treatment for you. These treatments must be applied as per instructions on the container. Most treatments should be left on for 8 – 24 hours before being washed off and are best done before going to bed. During this time the treatment will need to be re applied to the hands if they are washed.

IS THERE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THE TREATMENTS?

The treatment should not be applied after a hot bath. The treatments are safe but even after a successful treatment, itching may continue for 2 – 3 weeks, but can be treated with a soothing lotion like calamine.

No special precautions need to be taken with used clothing and bed linen, one hot cycle in a washing machine is sufficient.

HOW DO WE BREAK THE CHAIN OF TRANSMISSION?

Since the symptoms of Scabies take several weeks to appear, it is easy for close contacts to become infected before the infection is suspected. Therefore, anyone who is in prolonged close contact with someone who has scabies should also be treated in case they too pass it on to someone else. These contacts will usually need treatment whether they are itching or not.

HOW SOON CAN THE PERSON RETURN TO WORK/THE CARE SETTING?

The person can go back to work or the care setting the day after treatment.