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## What is Scabies?

**Classical scabies** is a very itchy skin rash. The rash is an allergy to a tiny mite smaller than a pinhead. The mites burrow under the skin and cannot be seen.

**Crusted scabies** is the same infection but with many, many more mites. Not all people with “crusted” scabies itch. Scabies is more likely to spread from “crusted” scabies.

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## How do you know you have it?

You have a very itchy rash almost anywhere on the body. The fingers, underarms, wrists, sides of body, waistline, buttocks, female breast, genitals and inside legs are the more common parts of the body to be affected. Itching is worse when you are warm in bed. Check with your doctor. You may know someone else who has an itchy rash.

The itching begins up to two months after catching the mites, so they can be passed to someone else before the rash appears.

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## How can you catch it?

The mites pass from person to person when people are in prolonged skin-to-skin contact with each other. The hand is the most common site to be first affected. Sleeping in the same bed, and sexual contact are other common ways of passing on the mite. The risk of scabies spreading in schools is very low.

Pets can pass on animal scabies but it generally only last a short length of time in humans.

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## How do you get rid of it?

By treating with a lotion or cream. You can buy it from a chemist without prescription, but it is better to see your doctor first. Everyone should be treated at the same time so the mites do not pass back to a treated person. You should not take a bath or shower just before putting on the lotion or cream.

- ❖ Take off all your clothes. Remember to take off watches and rings
- ❖ The lotion or cream needs to be spread all over the body from head to toe, only avoiding eyes, nose, mouth and thick head hair
- ❖ Get help for the centre of your back
- ❖ Pour lotion (or cream) into the palm of your hand
- ❖ The special care to put it over all parts of the body
- ❖ Let the lotion dry before you get dressed or it may rub off (this takes 10-15 minutes)
- ❖ Do the soles of your feet after getting dressed
- ❖ Put more lotion on any parts you wash in the first 24 hours (8 hours for cream)
- ❖ Reapply to any part of the body if it gets washed off. If you need to wash your hands often, use plastic gloves for dirty work during the treatment period

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## Who needs treatment?

- ❖ Everyone who has scabies
- ❖ All close contacts

Doctors sometimes advise treatment for suspected scabies, for example when no burrows can be seen.

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## How often is treatment needed?

**Classical Scabies Cases:** Two treatments covering all your skin should kill the mites and their eggs. Contacts of the case: Treatment should be carried out at the same time as the case(s) or before further contact with the case(s).

**Crusted Scabies Cases:** At least three treatments may be necessary, 48 hours apart. Contacts of the case: One treatment should be carried out at the same time as the last treatment of the case.

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## What about clothing and bedding?

**Classical Scabies:** Mites die if they fall off the body and do not spread on clothes, towels or bedding. Normal washing of clothes and bedding is recommended.

**Crusted Scabies:** There are so many mites, which may fall off as "crusts" (like flakes of skin) that all clothing and bedding should be washed in a hot wash, and floors & chairs vacuumed well.

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## What about after the treatment?

After treatment (8 hours for cream, 24 hours for lotion) you can bath or shower as normal. You can return to work or school. You will not give scabies to anyone. Itching may last for 2 months after treatment. Use an anti-itch cream or tablets from your Pharmacist or doctor.

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## What about skin problems?

The skin will need time for the rash to settle down. If fresh spots appear go to your doctor. You may need more treatment or have a different skin problem.

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## Is Scabies serious?

No, not usually. Itching is usually severe and night time sleep is disturbed. If unrecognised long term, scabies can lead to other infections.

The lotions and cream are very gentle on the skin. Only about one in a thousand people have a little irritation for up to a day after using them.

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## Can it be prevented?

Good hygiene helps, such as daily baths, frequent handwashing and changing clothes regularly.

Pets cannot pass on the mites. It is a human infection that can only be passed on by other people

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## Need further advice or information?

- ❖ NHS Inform [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)
- ❖ NHS24 ☎ 111 [www.nhs24.co.uk](http://www.nhs24.co.uk)
- ❖ [www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk)
- ❖ Local health clinic or GP

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