

# Scabies – Patient Information

Engelska

## Background

Scabies is a skin disease caused by a small mite that is about 0.4 mm in size. The female tunnels through the skin, where she lays her eggs. The skin of an adult with scabies is usually infested with about 10-15 mites. A small number of people with impaired immunity may suffer from what is known as Norwegian scabies or crusted scabies. These people will instead have a large number of mites scattered across their bodies and are more contagious.

In recent years there has been an increased incidence in scabies in the community as well as in healthcare settings.

## Symptoms

Common symptoms of scabies include severe itching, especially at night. The itching typically occurs in areas where the skin is thin, such as between fingers, in the armpits and the insides of arms and thighs, the genital area, and around the nipples and navel. Small bumps and blisters may also appear on the skin and may resemble eczema.

## Incubation period

The incubation period is the time between exposure and the appearance of symptoms. The incubation period for scabies is 2-10 weeks. A person may be contagious during the incubation period. For recurrent scabies infection in the same person the incubation period may be 1-4 days.

## Transmission

Scabies is transmitted through close, somewhat extended bodily contact, generally for more than five minutes. Clothes, towels and bedding can spread the disease. Scabies mites crawl on warm skin, but cannot jump or fly. Scabies is moderately contagious. Scabies is not related to lack of hygiene. There is no risk of transmission with occasional short skin contact, such as shaking hands.

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis is based on the demonstration of scabies mites on microscopic examination.

## Treatment

- The most common treatment for adults: non-prescription topical salve that kills scabies. Carefully follow the package instructions.
- Wash your body thoroughly. Dry carefully. Apply the salve to your entire body except your head. Carefully apply between toes, fingers, buttocks and in the genital area. Nails need to be cut and treated with salve.
- Leave the salve on your body for 24 hours and do not wash it off during that time. If it is necessary to shower or bathe, reapply the salve to the washed body parts. This is important to keep in mind after handwashing or when changing diapers.
- Wash the salve off after 24 hours. Change clothes, bedding, hand towels and bath towels. Used clothes should be washed, or if that is not possible, aired out for five days. Do not forget about gloves, shoes, work clothes and exercise clothes.
- After completion of treatment there is no risk of infection. One treatment is usually enough.
- All family members and their close contacts, such as boyfriends, girlfriends and playmates should be treated simultaneously.
- The treatment can cause irritation, burning and dryness of the skin. Therefore, moisturizing cream can be used as needed after completed treatment. In some cases, cortisone cream may be needed. It takes several weeks for the itching to completely go away. The itching is caused by a reaction to the remaining dead mites.

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## Cleaning

Scabies mites are sensitive to heat and dehydration. They usually die after 2-3 days at room temperature and in normal humidity.

Wash used clothes and bed linens in the machine at 60° C

- Hang up and air out clothing and shoes that cannot be washed for at least five days
- Change bed linens, vacuum and air out bedding, soft rugs, pillows and throw blankets for at least 5 days

## Measures taken by hospitals/assisted living facilities

For confirmed or suspected scabies, you will be isolated/remain in your own room. During this time, food will be served in your room.

## Follow-up

None usually required.

**Ring 1177 for health care advice in English/Swedish or visit [www.1177.se/Halland/other-languages](http://www.1177.se/Halland/other-languages)**