

Scabies

Scabies is an itching rash caused by the scabies mite. There are often pimples, blisters and scratch marks on the skin. Scabies causes itching especially at night and typically in hands, armpits and genital area.

Transmission

Scabies is transmitted through skin contact, clothing and bed linen. Scabies is usually not transmitted easily but a repeated or close skin contact is required.

Symptoms begin 3–6 weeks after transmission. In a renewed infection, symptoms can start in just a few days.

If a person develops symptoms consistent with scabies, treatment can be started without a visit to the doctor. Health care services should be contacted if you are not sure whether it is a case of scabies or if scabies is suspected in a child under 2 years old or in a person that is pregnant or breastfeeding.

Treatment

Scabies is primarily treated with a permethrin cream available at pharmacies without prescription. In some cases, scabies can also be treated with ivermectin, a prescription medicine taken orally. People living in the same household (including those without symptoms) and those that are otherwise in a repeated/close skin contact should be treated at the same time. Everybody repeats the treatment after 7–10 days.

Nails should be cut short. Cream is applied on dry, clean and cool skin. Cream is applied on the whole body, including the neck, ears and scalp. Particular care should be taken when applying the cream between the fingers and toes, under the nails, wrists, armpits, palms of the hands, soles of the feet, external genitalia and buttocks. Applying the cream around the mouth and eyes must be avoided. If you must have to your hands during treatment, the cream should be reapplied on them. **Leave the cream on overnight, for at least 12 hours, then wash it off.**

On the day following the medicinal treatment

- vacuum mattresses, furniture, and carpets
- air out or vacuum duvets and pillows
- change bed linen and all clothes, including outerwear and gloves
 - wash used clothes and bed linen at 60 degrees or seal them in a plastic bag for a week or freeze them in a freezer/outside at -20 degrees for 24 hours

Normal weekly cleaning is sufficient (vacuuming the rooms and thoroughly wiping the surfaces, door handles and taps in the toilet). Use disposable gloves for cleaning. Repeat the clean-up in conjunction with the second treatment.

The infection is reported to people that have been in skin contact, the child's daycare or school. One can return to daycare or school once 24 hours have passed after washing off the medicinal cream or taking the tablets.

After the treatment itching may persist for 2–4 weeks and can be treated with cortisone cream. If the itching is prolonged, you should contact health care services.

More instructions on the website of Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) [Syhy - THL](#) and Health Library (Terveyskirjasto) [Syhy \(scabies\) - Terveyskirjasto](#)

See also Infections and Daycare in the Health Library
<https://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/dlk01200>