

Scabies

Scabies is an itchy rash caused by the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. Spots, blisters and scratch marks often appear on the skin of infected individuals. Scabies causes itching, especially at night and typically on the hands, in the armpits and in the genital area.

Infection

Scabies is passed on via skin contact, clothing and bed linen. Scabies is usually not passed on easily, as it requires repeated or close skin contact. Symptoms begin 3–6 weeks after infection. In cases of reinfection, 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 two years old or in a person who is pregnant or breastfeeding.

Treatment

Scabies is primarily treated with **benzyl benzoate cream**, which is available at pharmacies without prescription. Fingernails and toenails should be cut short. The cream should be applied to dry, clean and cool skin. The cream should be applied on the whole body, including the neck, ears and scalp. There is no need to treat your face if there are no changes to your skin there. Particular care should be taken to be thorough when applying the cream between the fingers and toes, under the nails, around the wrists, in the armpits, on the palms of the hands, on the soles of the feet, on the external genitalia and on the buttocks. Applying the cream around the mouth and eyes must be avoided. If you have to wash your hands while the cream is working, you must reapply the cream to your hands.

Leave the cream to work for at least 24 hours, then wash it off.

You may also treat scabies with **permethrin cream**. Treatment with permethrin is carried out in the same way as with benzyl benzoate, but it must be left on overnight, for at least 12 hours, to work, after which it is can be washed off.

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 who otherwise come into repeated/close skin contact should be treated at the same time.

Everybody must then repeat the treatment after 7–10 days.

On the day after the treatment:

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

Cleaning at the level of a normal weekly clean is sufficient (vacuuming the rooms and thoroughly wiping down surfaces and the door handles and taps in the toilet). Use disposable gloves when cleaning. Repeat the cleaning when you carry out the second round of treatment.

Please inform anyone who has been in skin contact with the infected individuals, including the children's daycare provider or school if children are concerned, of the infection. The child may return to the daycare location or school **once the medication is washed off after remaining on the skin for 12 or 24 hours (depending on the cream used), or the next day after ingesting the tablet.**

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

More instructions are available on the websites of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) [Syyhy – THL](#) and Terveyskirjasto [Syyhy \(scabies\) – Terveyskirjasto](#) (both in Finnish)

You can also see more information about infections and daycare on the Terveyskirjasto website <https://www.terveyskirjasto.fi/dlk01200> (in Finnish)