

Scabies

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

What is scabies?

Scabies is caused by a tiny mite which can live on the skin. The mite burrows into the outer layer of the skin to lay its eggs. As the eggs hatch and grow into mites, they cause an allergic reaction in the skin, often accompanied by intense itching.

Crusted (Norwegian) Scabies occurs very occasionally and is found mainly in the elderly and people with immune system problems. The number of mites is much higher and causes thickening and crusting of the skin.

How is it spread?

Scabies is passed on by fairly prolonged, direct skin contact with an affected person, for example between couples or parents and their children. It is not spread by towels, bedding or clothing.

In crusted scabies cases, transmission by contact is easier and quicker because of the large number of mites present in the skin. Crusted scabies can also be transmitted via bedding, towels and clothing.

What are the symptoms?

The mites' burrows can often be seen as thin light brown or silvery wavy lines often on the wrists, elbows, between the fingers, or genital areas.

Widespread and intense itching occurs, particularly at night.

A rash of pinkish-red or small white-headed spots appears, commonly on the arms, inner thigh, buttocks and genitals. In infants and children, the face, scalp, palms and soles of the feet may also be affected.

In the early stages, an affected person may not show any symptoms of infection.

How could I have avoided catching it?

Scabies can infect anyone regardless of age, gender, cleanliness or living conditions. It can be transferred to anyone having contact with an affected person.

What will happen to me now?

Scabies is easily treated with a lotion that needs to be applied all over your body. This usually consists of two treatments, seven days apart. All people in close contact with you (e.g. family and household members, sexual partners) may require treatment at the same time to prevent re-infection occurring, even if they don't have symptoms.

If you are admitted to hospital, you will need to be nursed in a single room until you have had your first course of treatment (24 hours).

You may find that itching continues, even after successful treatment. If after several days the itch is still present and not lessening, tell your doctor.

Following completion of each treatment, have a wash, bath or shower to remove the cream. If you were diagnosed with crusted scabies, it will be necessary to launder your bed linen and clothing.

Further information

If you have any queries, please ask the ward staff or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Department: 01271 322680.

References

NHS Direct Patient Information Leaflet

Online at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/Scabies/Pages/Introduction.aspx

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

© Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
This leaflet was designed by the Communications Department.
Tel: 01271 313970 / email: ndht.communications@nhs.net