



Infectious diseases and infection control unit

## Instructions for patients with scabies or been exposed to it

Scabies is an itchy rash caused by the itch mite (*Scarcoptes scabiei*). The itching usually starts 3 to 6 weeks after the infection. Even one female mite is enough to cause an infection, but shaking hands or other short contact is usually not enough for a mite to move from one person to another. Scabies can also be contracted from the sheets or clothing of a person who has scabies, as the female mite can live outside the skin for 1 to 1.5 days, but this method of infection is less common.

If you suspect you have scabies or have symptoms of scabies, you should see a physician so that a diagnosis can be made. Making a scabies diagnosis can be challenging because the symptoms may be unclear.

If your child is diagnosed with scabies, notify their early childhood education teacher or classroom teacher.

### Symptoms of scabies

- Itching, especially in the evening and at night. The symptoms are more pronounced between fingers, in the buttock area and in the wrists.
- The skin has unusual pimples, blisters and scratch marks.
- The female mite's trails in the wrist area and between fingers. In children, also in the palms of their hands and soles of their feet.

### Treatment of scabies

The pharmacy provides a non-prescription cream containing permethrin (NIX® emulsion cream). One tube is sufficient for one treatment in adults, and a children's dose is lower according to age. The cream is applied in the evening after a wash, everywhere downwards from the jaw, including the genitals and between the fingers and toes. The scalp and face are also treated if they show symptoms. The cream must not be applied to mucous membranes. In the morning, the skin is washed carefully. The treatment is repeated in 7 to 10 days.

The physician may also prescribe tablet medication for the treatment of scabies, or a sulphur cream prepared at the pharmacy. The tablet treatment is also repeated after a week.

A person who has contracted scabies may return to the early childhood education / school / work the day after the first treatment.

After successful treatment, the itching may continue for a few weeks, so ensure use of lotion during this time with, for example, at first an ointment containing mentholated spirits and later a moisturising cream. You can also ease the itching with a mild cortisone cream which can be obtained from the pharmacy without a prescription. If the itching continues for more than 3 weeks, contact a physician.

## Treatment of those exposed to scabies

People living in the same household, sleeping in the same bed (e.g. overnight stays for children and young people), people with whom more time has been spent in close contact (e.g. friends and children's playmates) as well as sexual contacts are considered exposed. Those living in the same household, sleeping in the same bed or having sexual contact are treated twice, with 7 to 10 days between treatments. For other exposed persons, one treatment is sufficient. The treatment must take place as simultaneously as possible.

In epidemic situations, such as epidemics in an early childhood education group or school class, the physician responsible for communicable diseases determines the exposed persons. Treatment of those exposed in early childhood education groups and school classes must also take place simultaneously.

## Cleaning on the day after medical treatment

- wear disposable gloves during cleaning
- put in clean bedding
- vacuum mattresses, sofas, carpets and upholstered chairs
- air or vacuum blankets and pillows
- change all clothes
- air and take out of use outer clothing for 2 to 3 days
- include mittens and gloves used within 3 days
- replace towels
- wash clothes, soft toys and bedding in a 60-degree wash cycle and, if possible, dry them in the dryer or take them out to air, or seal them in a plastic bag for three days, or freeze them in the freezer / outdoors ( $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  or colder) for 24 hours.

Cleaning is repeated in connection with the second treatment.