

Scabies

General points

- Human scabies is an infestation of the skin caused by the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*
- The mite is spread by skin to skin contact with an infested person and family members are often infested at the same time
- There is always a contact – it does not appear spontaneously
- Typical features include:
 - a very itchy widespread inflammatory papular eruption
 - burrows on fingers, wrists, ankles and feet
 - inflammatory nodules on nipples, penis or scrotum
 - axillae often affected in the elderly
- Infants often develop vesicles or pustules on palms, soles, head and neck
- The scabies rash can develop secondary bacterial infection

There is usually more than one family member affected

Patient information leaflet [here](#)

Treatment

Treatment failure is usually because of non-adherence to the following advice:

- First line treatment is Permethrin 5% (Lyclear Dermal cream)
- Second line treatment is Malathion 0.5% (Derbac M aqueous solution)

Rub it gently into all parts of the body below the chin. This includes the web spaces of the fingers and toes, under the nails (after clipping and removing debris) and all body folds. Avoid hot baths before treatment.

- Permethrin must be left on the skin for 8-12 hours
- Malathion is left on for 24 hours.

Permethrin or Malathion should be applied TWICE, one week apart.

Treatment should be extended to include *scalp, neck, face and ears* in:

- young children up to and around 2 years
- immunocompromised patients
- elderly people
- those in whom treatment has failed

After treatment patients can bath and change underclothes, nightclothes and bedding (to wash the cream off rather than to kill mites)

All contacts (whether symptomatic or not) should be treated at the same time. This means all household members; sexual contacts; and close (hand to hand) social contacts

Therapeutic tips

If these directions have been followed, then the mites in the skin will have been killed, but the itching may take 3-6 weeks to settle

Residual itch can be treated with:

- emollients
- Eurax
- mild potency topical steroid cream

Treatment failure is likely if, after treatment, itching increases or new burrows start to appear. Most treatment failures occur as a result of failure to treat the entire skin (including head, behind ears and under nails) or failure to treat contacts at the same time (allowing re-infestation).

Note: Permethrin should be reapplied after hand-washing.

Referral criteria

- Non-response to treatment
- Crusted “Norwegian” scabies is highly contagious and will require specialist advice about treatment
- Persistent scabies in an immunocompromised patient