



Scabies – Patient Information



What is scabies?

Scabies is a common and very itchy skin rash caused by a tiny mite called *Sarcoptes scabiei*. It can affect people of any age but is most common in the young and the elderly.

What causes scabies?

- The mites that cause scabies are tiny parasites.
- They are usually spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with someone who already has scabies and sometimes, but rarely, from shared clothing, towels or bedding
- People affected by scabies have an average of about a dozen adult mites on their skin; a few carry many more.
- Anyone can get scabies.
- It is common for several members of a household to have scabies at the same time as it spreads easily amongst people who live together.

How is it treated?

Scabies is treated first line with permethrin cream (Lyclear[®]) or malathion liquid (Derbac M[®]) as a second line option, you can buy either from a Pharmacy without a prescription, but it is better to see your doctor first.

Both treatment options are recommended to be applied twice, one week apart. Everyone within a household or other close contacts should be treated at the same time so the mites do not pass back to a treated person.

Who needs treatment?

All household contacts and anyone who has been in close contact with each other should all be treated at the same time, even if they do not have any symptoms, as a precaution.

How to apply treatment (lotion or cream)?

- Do not have a hot bath or shower before putting on the cream and ensure skin is clean dry and cool.
- It is best to apply at night.
- Take off all your clothes including jewellery (if it is not possible to remove a ring, move it to one side to apply to the skin surface underneath).
- Apply to the whole body below the ears paying particular attention to the areas between the fingers and toes, wrists, armpits, external genitalia, buttocks and under finger and toenails.
- **For infants, children up to age two, adults over 65 years, the immunocompromised and those whose treatment has failed** you will also need to apply treatment to the scalp, neck, face & ears.
- If the treatment is to be applied to the head, avoid the eyes and in young children avoid the mouth area, where the cream/lotion may be licked off.
- Brush some of the product under the nails with a soft nail brush as mites can easily escape treatment in the thickened skin there.
- Nails should be trimmed and kept short for duration of treatment.
- You will need someone else to apply product to your back or areas you cannot reach.
- The product should be re-applied to the hands if they are washed with soap & water.
- Let the cream/lotion dry before getting dressed or it may rub off (this takes 10-15 minutes). Do the soles of your feet last after application to body has dried. This is best done with your feet resting on top of or dangling over the side of a bed or chair.

How long to leave treatment on

- **Permethrin cream (Lyclear®)** must remain in contact with the skin for 12 hours.
- **Malathion liquid (Derbac M®)** must remain in contact with the skin for 24 hours

If washing any area during the treatment period put more product on the area that was washed e.g. hands or skin after changing nappies or incontinence wear.

How to wash off treatment

- After the product has been on for the appropriate time it should be washed off initially with plain cool water and no soap. Once everything is washed off, a shower or bath with soap may be taken.
- Remember to re- apply after 7 days as two applications are required.

After treatment course complete

Most people with classical scabies are cured after two treatments, itching may continue for a few weeks after successful treatment. If symptoms persist contact your GP.

Return to work or school

Adults & children can return to work or school 24 hours after the first application of cream/lotion.

Bedding & clothing

- Bedding & clothing should be washed at high temperature to destroy mites.
- Items that can't be washed or dry cleaned should be sealed in a plastic bag for at least 72 hours or put in a freezer.

Pregnancy & Breastfeeding

Pregnancy: either product may be used as outlined above.

Breastfeeding: care must be taken that the breastfeeding infant does not suckle on treated skin (thereby avoiding swallowing the medicine).