

Scabies

Scabies is a skin condition caused by a mite known as the *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which infests the human skin. Anyone can get scabies, regardless of their race, age, social status or personal hygiene.

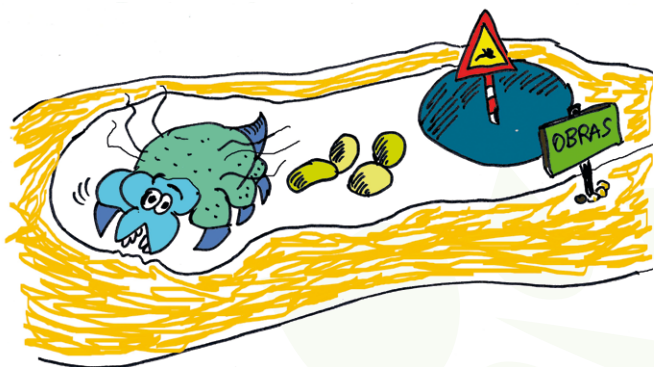
How is it transmitted?

It is usually spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, but also by clothing, bedding, towels, soft toys etc. That is why it is often passed on to members of the same family or residential institutions and sexual partners.

How can it be diagnosed?

Diagnosis is made on the basis of the affected person's signs and symptoms. After the initial exposure to scabies, it can take between 2 and 6 weeks for the symptoms to appear:

- Intense itching that gets worse at night.
- The mites burrow a track under the skin causing a distinctive red rash. This is the hallmark symptom of scabies and it appears particularly between the fingers and in folds in the skin, like the groin and armpits. It can also cause lumps and small whitish bumps.



Treatment

In addition to treating the skin, it is very important:

- To wash the infested clothes, sheets, towels, soft toys etc. at 60°C (50°C minimum).
- Anything that cannot be washed should be sealed in bags for 7-10 days.
- You should change your clothes, bedclothes and towels every day. You should also vacuum carpets, sofa covers, upholstery... and air the rooms thoroughly.

For your skin, 5 percent permethrin topical cream is the most effective treatment.

How do you apply permethrin?

- A single application is 90% effective in eliminating the parasite. However, a second application is recommended a week later.
- After a **hot shower, apply the cream to your whole body, except your head.** Pay particular attention to the most affected areas and avoid contact with your eyes and mouth.
- You should also apply it between and around your fingers and toes, including the tips and nails. Don't wash your hands afterwards.
- **You should leave it on your skin for 8 to 14 hours.** After that time, have a **lukewarm or cold shower** to remove the cream (hot water makes the itching worse).
- **Your whole family group, friends and sexual partners should be treated at the same time.**
- **Post-scabies itching can last for several weeks after the treatment,** due to a reaction of the immune system to the remains of the mites.