

IPC Bulletin for GP Practice Staff

Issue No. 62 - September 2025



Produced by an NHS Community Infection Prevention and Control Team based in North Yorkshire for distribution to subscribers.

Scabies

- Scabies is a skin condition caused by an immune reaction to the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei* and their saliva, eggs and faeces.
- There are 2 forms of scabies caused by the same mite, classical and crusted.
- The typical clinical presentation of infection is intense itching associated with burrows, nodules and redness.
- Symptoms can be hard to recognise and are often mistakenly attributed to other skin conditions. This can delay treatment and result in ongoing transmission.



Transmission

- Can occur with frequent, prolonged skin-to-skin contact, without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), with a person who is infected with scabies (approximately 10 minutes uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact, e.g. holding hands).
- Evidence suggests that the mites can live away from host for up to 4 days, but the role of bedding, clothing and/or towels in transmission is unclear. Transmission via clothing is considered much more likely from cases with crusted scabies due to the large number of mites present.

Incubation

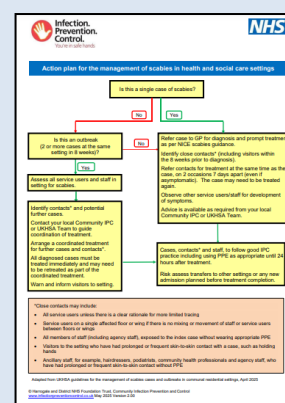
It can take 3-6 weeks for the symptoms to appear if a person has never had scabies. However, if a person has previously had scabies, it can be 1-4 days.

Close contacts

A person who has had skin-to-skin contact with a symptomatic case without wearing appropriate PPE within 8 weeks prior to the case's diagnosis is classed as a 'close contact'.

Treatment

- Treatment consists of 2 whole body applications of permethrin 5% cream, one week apart. In some cases, a tablet, e.g. Ivermectin, may be prescribed.
- Treatment of all contacts should be carried out at the same time. Application instructions are available to download at: [Scabies treatment: Patient instructions for application of cream - Infection Prevention Control](#).
- If there is an outbreak of scabies in a communal setting, mass treatment of staff and service users may be required. Please refer to [Action plan for the management of scabies in health and social care settings - Infection Prevention Control](#).
- It is important that prescriptions are available in a timely manner for mass treatments. However, diagnosed cases should start treatment as soon as possible to minimise their symptoms, reduce complications and the risk of onward spread.



Further information: [Community IPC Scabies Policy for General Practice](#),

[UKHSA guidelines for the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in communal residential settings](#)

What's new:

- IPC training event for General Practice: 10th November, 2025
[Infection Prevention and Control training event for General Practice November 2025 - Infection Prevention Control](#)

Visit our website to find lots of IPC resources, many of which are free to download.

www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk

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