

Scabies in Schools

What Is Scabies?

Scabies is caused by tiny mites (0.3mm) which burrow just under the skin surface and they can cause a marked allergic reaction or dermatitis (skin reaction) anywhere on the body. We generally only have a small number of mites but these can make us itchy all over making us believe we have a large number. They often cause an itch in a different part of the body to where they actually are, so when we treat we must be very thorough to cover all over ourselves from the jawline down

Why Is It So Important To Treat Scabies?

Because it will not go away without treatment and it can spread to others!

Who Gets It?

- Anyone! **Even the cleanest people get scabies**
- Washing in soap and water or swimming in the sea will not cure it

How Do You Catch It?

- Scabies spreads mainly by direct skin contact with other people eg in the school playground, within the family, friends
- By close body contact e.g. holding hands, touching, hugging, playing together. The longer the direct skin contact the more likely the chances of catching it, regardless of cleanliness.
- By sharing clothes and bedding
- Scabies do not live and multiply in furniture, carpets or on cats and dogs
- Generally we do not develop the delayed allergic reaction to the mite until it has been on us for about at least 10 days but up to some weeks, unless we have had it before. However we can pass it on if we do have it, before we have developed the itch
- It generally does not spread nearly as readily as head lice

How Do You Know You Have It?

- Scabies usually causes a very itchy rash which is worse at bedtime when you are warm.
- The rash is caused by an allergic hypersensitivity reaction to the scabies mite
- You may notice the rash first, often between fingers, on the wrist, outside elbows, around the waist, feet or on the bottom and on private parts
- If someone in the family has scabies, others may have caught it without noticing a rash or itch. Sometimes the rash can be mild, it causes a dermatitis/eczema type rash, although most causes of dermatitis are not caused by scabies
- If you know you may have had contact with someone who has scabies eg at school, and you have itchy skin, let your GP know that you may have been in contact with scabies.

Being alert to the possibility helps us all identify it and successfully treat it