

What about my partner?

Your partner(s) and anyone else living in your home should be treated at the same time, even if they have no symptoms.

When can I have sex again?

You can have sex again after both you and your partner(s) have completed the full treatment. Remember if you have picked up scabies through sexual contact it is a good idea to have an STI check up.

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Sláinte Ghnéis &
Clár um Thoirchis Ghéarchéime

Sexual Health &
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A guide to Scabies



sexualwellbeing.ie



What is scabies?

Scabies is caused by tiny insects (called mites) which burrow under the skin and lay eggs.

The mites are smaller than a pinhead and can be found in the genital area, on the hands, between the fingers, on the wrists and elbows, underneath the arms, on the stomach, on the feet and ankles, and around the bum.

If you have genital scabies, we recommend that you have tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV.

How do I get scabies?

Scabies is usually passed from one person to another by sexual contact or skin to skin contact.

However, scabies can live outside the body for 72 hours (3 days and nights) so you can also get them from clothing, bed sheets and towels.

What symptoms would I have with scabies?

It can take up to six weeks after coming into contact with scabies before noticing any symptoms.

Scabies cause an intense itch which is often worse at night or after a warm shower.

You may also have a red, itchy rash or tiny red spots. Sometimes the rash can be difficult to distinguish from other itchy skin conditions such as eczema.

You may have inflamed or raw, broken skin in the affected areas, usually caused by scratching.

Scabies mites are very tiny and impossible to see with the naked eye. Fine silvery lines are sometimes visible in the skin where mites have burrowed.

How can I be tested for scabies?

Scabies is diagnosed by a careful clinical examination of the skin. This can be done by your GP or at a sexual health clinic.

Your healthcare provider may gently take a skin flake from one of the areas and look at it under a microscope to see if there is a mite present.

How is scabies treated?

Scabies is treated with a cream, lotion or shampoo which is left on overnight. You can get the treatment over the counter in your local pharmacy. Occasionally oral medication is used to treat scabies. Your healthcare provider or pharmacist will advise you on which treatment to get and how to use it.

Close contacts in your household should also be treated, even if they have no symptoms.

The itch may continue for a few weeks after treatment and antihistamine tablets or cream can help.

You should wash all clothing in a 50 degree wash. Anything that cannot be washed (such as duvets, leather jackets and so on) should be put in tied black plastic bags and left for 3 days and nights until the mites die.