



Scoil Náisiúnta Bhantiarna Lourdes

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

We have had a case of scabies in the school and I give the following information for your attention.

Scabies

Scabies – what is it?

Scabies is a bumpy rash that is so intensely itchy that the associated scratching can actually break the skin. The itch is most intense between the fingers, at the wrists, the belt line, the underarms, the belly, the outer aspect of the feet and the buttocks. Except in young children, the face is not involved.

Scabies – what causes it?

It is caused by the mite, *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which burrows under the skin to lay approximately 3 eggs per day. The itchiness or the rash is caused by the reaction of the host's body to the mite. This sensitisation takes several weeks to develop after an initial infection but occurs much more rapidly with subsequent infections, with symptoms developing as soon as 1 to 2 days after re-infection.

Scabies – who gets it?

Anyone can.

Scabies – how is it passed?

From person to person by close personal contact. Skin scales from an infected person are infectious. Some children get a very heavy infestation and will have crusted and scratched skin lesions (so called Norwegian scabies). These children are highly contagious and even minimal contact with their skin can be enough for transmission. The mites can survive for about three days off the body and thus transmission through infected bedding or clothes can also occur.

Scabies – how is it diagnosed?

Scabies can usually be recognised by looking for the typical rash and finding the small threadlike burrows of the mite. However, as vigorous scratching can obliterate these, examination of skin scrapings under the microscope may be necessary to confirm the diagnosis.

Scabies – how is it treated?

A variety of scabicial lotions and creams are available at the chemist. Application procedures vary depending on the product used. In general, they are applied at bedtime to the entire skin (excluding the head and face) and rinsed off the following morning. A second application 4 to 7 days later is recommended. As spread within households is common,

some doctors will elect to treat all family members at the same time even if there are no symptoms.

Scabies – should children be excluded?

Parents of children with a suspicious rash should be advised to bring them to their doctor for evaluation, but do not need to be sent home in the middle of a school day.

Scabies – when can children return?

A person with a definite infection can return to school as soon as they are treated.

Scabies – how to stop spread?

- ✓ If a suspicious rash is noted on a child bring it to the parents_ attention and advise them to consult their doctor.
- ✓ Notify parents if there is a case in the classroom so that they can check their children.
- ✓ All clothing and bedding which has been used by the infected person in the 72 hours prior to treatment should be washed in the **HOT** cycle of the washing machine.
- ✓ Items which cannot be readily washed (pillows, stuffed toys) should be stored in tightly closed plastic bags for four days before using again (when off the body the life cycle of the mite is less than four days, thus items stored in this way will be free of mites when taken out for use).

Thank you for giving this your attention. Your family doctor and local health clinic will be able to answer any further questions that you might have about scabies.



(This information is taken from "Infection in School – A Manual for School Personnel" compiled by the Health Promotion Unit)

James Roberts, Principal