Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Health and Care Partnership

NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board

# Medicines Management process for an outbreak of scabies in a care home or residential setting

Version 1.0

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Document produced by: Care Home Medicines Optimisation Team,

NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB)

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**Version Control**

| Version | Date | Reviewer (s) | Revision Description |
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| Version 1.0 | October 2025 | BLMK ICB Care Home Medicines Optimisation Team | New guidance document |

**Committee where guidance was discussed/approved/ratified**

| Committee/Group | Date | Status |
|---|---|---|
| BLMK Primary Care Prescribing Committee | 12th December 2025 | Approved |

## Contents

## Introduction

This guidance has been produced to support care homes, PCNs/GP Practices and community pharmacies with the medicines management process following an outbreak of scabies. It includes information on **bulk prescribing,** and particularly the **bulk prescribing of Permethrin 5% cream** for treating an outbreak.

**Definitions as per UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA):**

**Outbreak** – an outbreak is defined as 2 or more epidemiologically linked cases of scabies within an 8-week period within a setting.
**Case** - a scabies case is a single case defined as a diagnosis of any type of scabies in an individual.
**Close contact** – close contacts are likely to include anyone who has skin to skin contact with a case without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) within the 8 weeks prior to the case's diagnosis.

**Alternative treatments for scabies are not covered by this guidance but can be found in the UKSHA advice link below.**

In the event of an outbreak please ensure your organisation's infection prevention and control (IPC) practices are robust and all staff are following the correct IPC procedures. You can find more information on the management of scabies cases and outbreaks via the UKSHA guidance link below. An algorithm flowchart summarising the public health management can be found on page 8.

**UKHSA guidelines for the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in communal residential settings - GOV.UK**

For any further advice and guidance needed on IPC practices, please contact the BLMK ICB Infection Control team via email: **blmkicb.infectioncontrol@nhs.net.** Your message will be answered within 24 hours of receipt from Monday - Friday. If your message is received at the weekend, it will be answered the following Monday.

## Responsibilities

All individuals involved in the management of scabies cases should understand the process and the aims of treatment to ensure any outbreaks are controlled.

It is important that a person diagnosed with scabies is treated as soon as possible and should not wait for wider mass treatment in the setting. This is to minimise their symptoms, reduce risk of complications and reduce the risk of further onward transmission.

- **General Practitioners (GPs)**

If notified of a scabies outbreak in a care home or residential setting:

1. Identify residents under your care and registered at your practice

2. Use the SystmOne record to check for any allergies or sensitivities to Permethrin, chrysanthemums or other compositae (flowering plants), or for any allergies or sensitivities to any of the other excipients listed in the product information for **Permethrin 5% w/w Cream**
3. Write a **bulk prescription** for Permethrin cream 5% for appropriate residents (see page 5)
4. Write individual prescriptions for alternative treatment for those inappropriate for Permethrin cream 5%

- **Care home staff**

As mentioned above GPs can bulk prescribe and community pharmacies dispense Permethrin 5% cream in the event of a scabies outbreak. For more information visit the NHSBSA website: What is a bulk prescription and are there any restrictions on what can be prescribed?

**Important information for care home staff:**

The bulk prescribed permethrin 5% cream will not have individual resident names on the tubes, only the care home name.

The care home should write the resident's name on the label and outer box to ensure each tube is used for only one resident. This will require agreement with the community pharmacy as to whether MAR charts are going to be supplied to the care home.

If MAR charts are not supplied, a suitably trained staff member should transcribe/add the instructions provided by the GP surgery for the cream onto each resident's MAR chart or eMAR. Ensure any MAR charts or eMAR entries produced in the care home are checked for accuracy by a second trained staff member and both staff must sign the chart.

Staff and other contacts must obtain a prescription from their own GP surgery if they are not registered with the same surgery as the care home. The care home can purchase permethrin for staff use from a local community pharmacy, if appropriate. Check for allergies and sensitivities in the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) for **Permethrin 5% w/w Cream** including chrysanthemums or Compositae (a type of flowering plant).

Staff or residents who may be pregnant or breast feeding should consult a healthcare professional before commencing treatment.

Treatment should be coordinated so that **everyone is treated on the same day**. This includes anyone (staff, visitors and residents) who have had close physical contact with the case without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) within 8 weeks prior to diagnosis. If staff contacts are off duty at the time of treatment, they should complete the first 24-hour treatment before returning to work.

Contacts and residents should all receive **two treatments one week apart.**

For further information on scabies, please visit the **NHS website - Scabies.**

➢ **Community Pharmacies**

- The GP practice will contact you to order the required quantity of Permethrin 5% cream.
- The GP practice will provide you with a bulk prescription for Permethrin 5% cream for the residents under the care of each GP.
  **See the PSNC website: Is this prescription form valid?**
- The tubes will need to be labelled with the name of the care home rather than each individual resident.
- Agree with the care home whether MAR charts are going to be supplied.

## Bulk Prescribing in Care Homes

A bulk prescription is an order for two or more patients, bearing the name of a care home, in which at least twenty persons normally reside, for the treatment of at least ten of whom a particular doctor is responsible, for medicines which are not prescription-only.

Patients not registered under a particular GP who is bulk prescribing for a care home, should continue to receive named patient supplies from their own GP (unless their GP is also bulk prescribing for that care home).

**Information for GP Practices on Bulk Prescribing of Permethrin 5% cream:**

Liaise with any other GP practices who have residents living in the care home to co-ordinate treatment. GPs may bulk prescribe for residents under certain circumstances (see below), but each GP needs to prescribe for the residents under their care.

Quantity required depends on the number of residents to be treated. All residents requiring treatment should be treated on **two occasions one week apart** (even if asymptomatic) as per: UKHSA guidelines for the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in communal residential settings - GOV.UK

Adults, the elderly, and children over 12 years will normally require up to one tube (30g) per treatment, i.e. two tubes to complete the course.

In some cases, adults may need to use an additional tube for full body coverage but should not use more than two tubes (60g in total) at each application, i.e. a maximum of four tubes to complete the course.

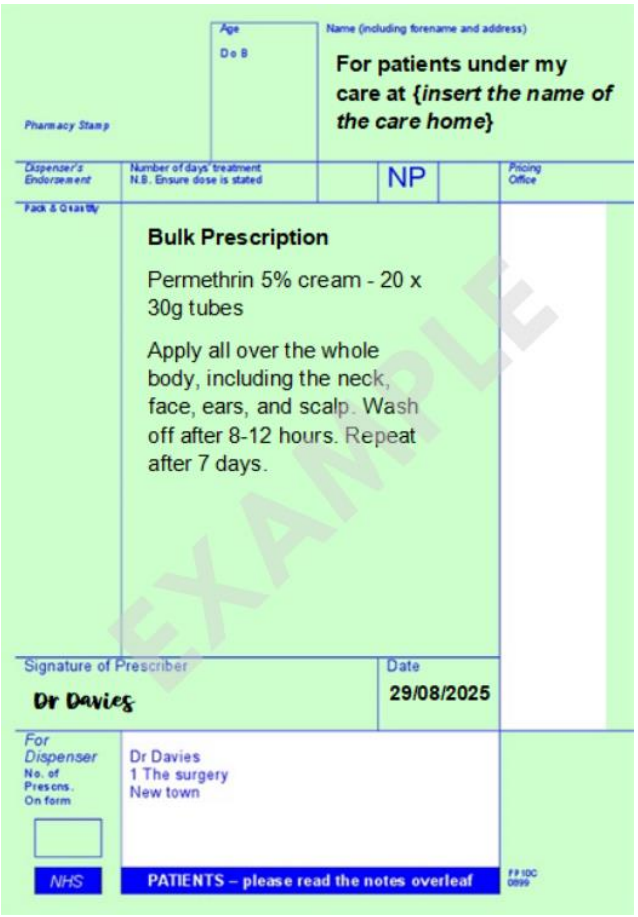
As the treatment for scabies is an acute issue and not an ongoing treatment, permethrin 5% cream does not need to be prescribed on an individual basis for each resident initially.

Bulk prescriptions can be used in a scabies outbreak as permethrin 5% cream is a Pharmacy Only (“P”) medicine.

A bulk prescription can be written or printed on a paper FP10 prescription; **it cannot be sent via EPS as there is no patient name. This can only be signed by a General Prescriber, not a Non-Medical Prescriber currently.**

**Requirements for Bulk Prescriptions (see sample prescription below):**

1. Use the wording “for patients under my care at {the name of the care home}” (instead of the individual name of the patient).
2. Date prescribed.
3. The words ‘bulk prescription’ – to identify the type of prescription.
4. The medicine that is being ‘bulk prescribed’.
5. The total quantity required for all residents on this medication.
6. The directions i.e. for permethrin 5% cream: apply all over the whole body, including the neck, face, ears, and scalp. Wash off after 8-12 hours. Repeat after 7 days. Two treatment courses are required for each person (i.e., 2 x 30g tubes). The prescription should be for enough to treat all residents, taking into account those who will need to use 2 tubes per treatment course.
7. An entry must be made into each resident’s medical record, either by bulk entry, or individually.




Remember to **check for allergies and sensitivities** to Permethrin including chrysanthemums or compositae (type of flowering plant), or for any allergies or sensitivities to any of the other excipients listed which can be found in the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) for Permethrin 5% w/w Cream.

Review and discuss any current treatment with topical corticosteroids the resident may be on or starting. The SPC states these should be withheld prior to treatment with Permethrin 5% w/w Dermal Cream, as there is a risk of exacerbating the scabies infestation by reducing the immune response to the mite. The likelihood of interactions between the two treatments leading to potentiated adverse reactions or reduced efficacy is, however, small. Manufacturers do not specify a defined duration in days for withholding topical corticosteroids either before or after treatment with Permethrin, therefore the decision would need to be based on clinical judgement and individual patient assessment.

Please be aware of any ‘Topical Steroid Withdrawal Reactions’ (TSW) if there has been long-term use of a moderate or stronger potency topical steroid. For further information please refer to: Topical steroids: introduction of new labelling and a reminder of the possibility of severe side effects, including Topical Steroid Withdrawal Reactions - GOV.UK

Consider prescribing oral ivermectin over Permethrin in people who have pre-existing eczema or other skin conditions which may lead to hypersensitivity, for further information please refer to: Scenario: Management of scabies | Management | Scabies | CKS | NICE

Provide the care home with a list of residents who are being treated under the bulk prescription.

Provide a separate list of any residents who cannot be treated with permethrin cream 5% due to allergy / intolerance / sensitivity. Alternative treatment should be arranged for these residents on an individual basis so that treatment can be co-ordinated for all residents, staff, and other contacts.

Ensure that the care home is provided with additional written instructions for use of permethrin 5% cream, see **Appendix 2** for UKSHA advice.

## Further support and references

UKHSA guidelines for the management of scabies cases and outbreaks in communal residential settings - GOV.UK

Scabies - NHS

Scabies | Health topics A to Z | CKS | NICE

**BLMK ICB Infection Control team** - blmkicb.infectioncontrol@nhs.net

**The BLMK ICB Care Home Medicines Optimisation team can be contacted via email:**
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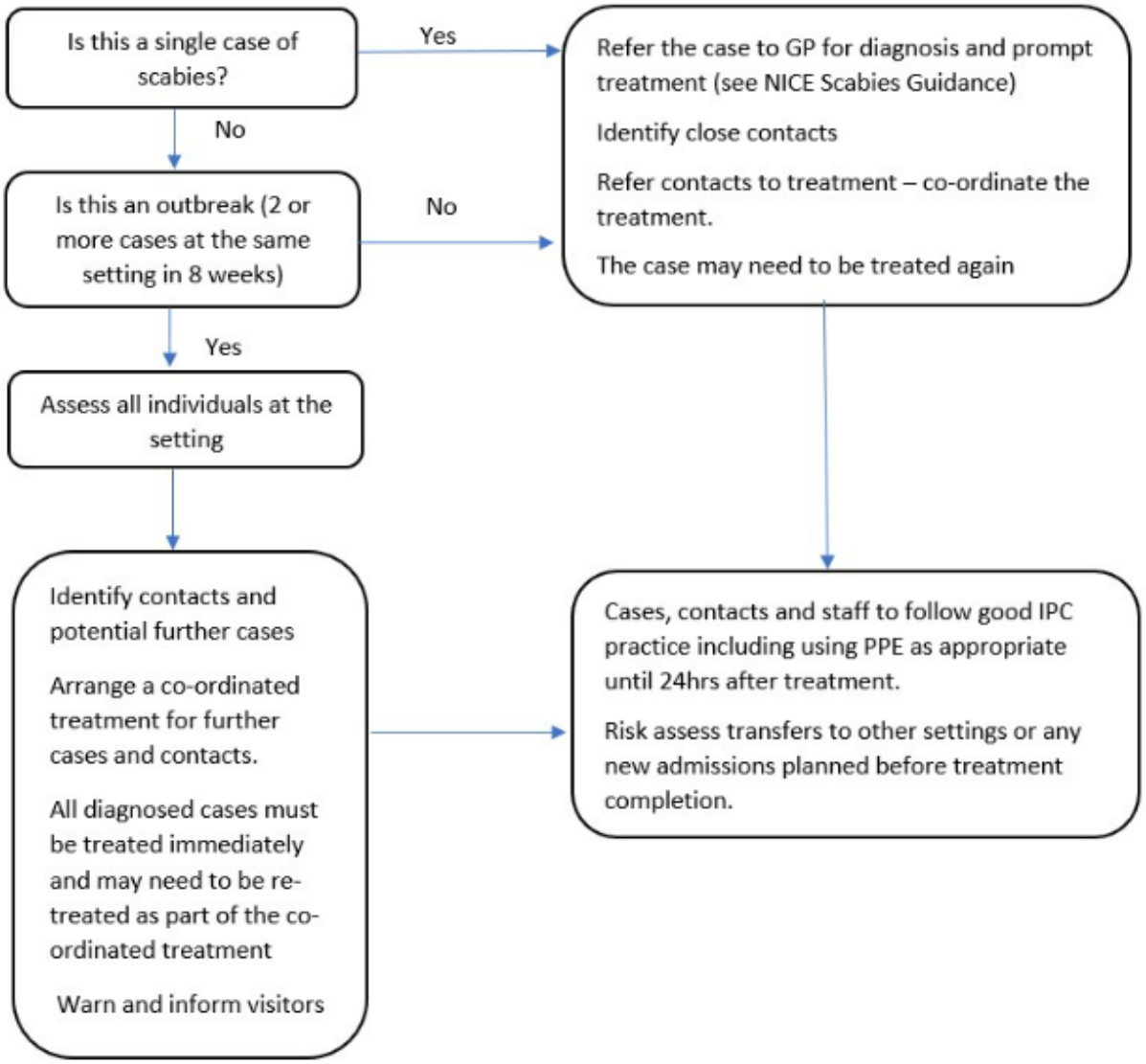
**Acknowledgment:**
We would like to thank NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB for allowing us to use their guidance on the process for medicines management of an outbreak of scabies in a care or residential setting.

**Appendix 1:**

# Algorithm summarising the public health management

The algorithm consists of 2 questions which follow each other to help determine if the setting is dealing with an outbreak and to guide public health management.



**Appendix 2:**

**Instructions for residents/carers on application of Permethrin 5% cream**

- Carers who apply permethrin 5% cream should wear gloves to avoid any possible irritation to the hands.
- Apply the cream to cool, dry skin, all over the whole body, not just where the rash is.
- Do not apply it straight after having a bath.
- Make sure to cover under the nails, between fingers and toes, behind the ears, the face, scalp, genitals, and soles of the feet.
- Avoid contact with the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- The resident should put on/be dressed in clean clothes and change bedding straight after treatment.
- Leave the cream on for 8 to 12 hours, then wash it off.
- Advise the resident if they wash their hands during this time, then the cream must be reapplied to them.
- Repeat the treatment one week later.
- Everyone in the care home and other close contacts should also be treated at the same time.
- If the cream comes into contact with dressings, clothing, and bedding, the fabric can be easily ignited with a naked flame – advise the resident not to smoke or go near naked flames.
- Wash clothes, towels, and bedding at the highest temperature the fabric tolerates on the day treatment is started.
- Ironing and tumble drying at high heat will help kill the mites.
- The care home should be thoroughly cleaned and vacuumed including furniture.

After treatment, itching may last for up to 6 weeks. This does not mean the treatment has failed. It happens because the body is still reacting to the mites. A doctor or a pharmacist can advise on medications or lotions to help ease the itching.