

Sarcoptes scabiei (scabies)

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Scabies

- > *Sarcoptes scabiei* is a common disease of the skin caused by a small parasitic mite and associated with close living conditions
- > The mite is oval, straw coloured, and measures 0.2 to 0.4 mm in length.
- > The entire life cycle of the mite is 10 to 17 days
- > Host specific for humans
- > *Sarcoptes* mites from other animals may also occasionally infest humans

Clinical features

- > Unexplained itch of recent onset
- > Intense itching may initially occur when the body is warm in bed or after a hot shower
- > Irritation may be noticeable in the skin between fingers and inside wrists and elbows, waistline and thighs.
- > First signs are small, slightly raised itchy red spots on the skin near the tiny openings of the 'burrows' created by female mites. Burrows may appear as red tracks

Diagnosis

The presence of one of the following confirms diagnosis:

- > Identifiable typical burrow particularly associated with itchy rash
- > Positive skin scrapings showing eggs or mite or faeces

Consider in the presence of the following:

- > Sudden onset of unexplainable itchy rash (especially if other contacts are also itchy)
- > History of contact with a scabetic person
- > Unusual pruritic psoriasiform rashes that are crusted and scaling or blistering

Mode of transmission

- > Skin contact with an infected person
- > Contact with infected towels, bedclothes and undergarments only if these have been contaminated by infested persons within the last four to five day

Incubation period

- > Usually two to six weeks before itching occurs in a person not previously infected.
- > If a person is re-exposed, the incubation period is one to four days

Infection precautions

- > Additional precautions

Treatment

- > All household members and sexual contacts should be treated simultaneously
- > Wash all bed linen, clothes and towels used by the woman in hot water
- > Blankets can be dry cleaned or placed in a tumble dryer on a hot setting for half an hour, or sealed in a plastic bag for one to two weeks
- > The woman will be non-infectious within 24 hours of treatment, but up to two months may be required for the skin lesions and itch to disappear completely

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Antiscabietic treatment

- > The usual treatment in pregnancy is with permethrin (Lyclear®)
- > Apply lotion to the whole body from the neck to the toes, avoiding the face and the head
- > After eight to twelve hours, wash off with soap and water

Other treatments

- > Antihistamines, calamine lotion and Eurax® (also a scabicide) are useful to counteract itchiness

Reference

1. Department of Health (DoH). You've got what. Scabies. Government of South Australia.
Available from: URL: <http://www.health.sa.gov.au/PEHS/Youve-got-what/ygw-scabies.pdf>

Version control and change history

PDS reference: OCE use only

Version	Date from	Date to	Amendment
1.0	19 June 04	21 April 09	Original version
2.0	21 April 09	current	