

SCABIES



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Scabies is a highly contagious, but curable, skin disease that affects nearly 1/3 of a billion people worldwide. It is caused by a tiny mite that spends nearly its entire life in or on human skin. Although it is more common in warm climates, scabies can occur anywhere and within all social and income levels. It affects men, women and children of all ages from infants to the elderly.

Because of its highly contagious nature, scabies is easily transmitted from person to person through close physical contact such as between family members, sexual partners, children playing at school, and hospital and nursing home patients. An unproven, but possible, method of transmission is via infested clothing, bedding and towels.

Treatment

Elimite (permethrin) 5% cream is an extremely safe and effective treatment for scabies that destroys the mites and relieves the itching. Elimite cream is proven safe for children as young as two months old.

Just before bedtime thoroughly and gently massage Elimite cream into all skin surfaces from the head to the soles of the feet. It is critical to apply Elimite cream on every square inch of your body and not just on the rash. Apply between the finger and toe creases, in the folds of the wrist and waistline, in the cleft of the buttocks, on the genitals and in the belly button. Keep your nails clipped short. Scabies mites can hide under your fingernails.

You may notice a mild itching, burning or stinging sensation after applying the cream. This is usually just a minor, temporary reaction to the medication. Leave the cream on for 8 to 14 hours or overnight. In the morning, remove all bed linens and launder them, and then bathe or shower and shampoo to remove the Elimite cream. Repeat this whole process in one week.

Although scabies mites cannot live long without a human host, there have been a few cases of apparent transmission through infested clothing and bedding. Even so, heroic cleaning efforts are generally unnecessary. Normal, hot water laundering of towels, linens and all clothes used within the previous 48 hours is typically sufficient to prevent reinfestation. Clean clothes or heavy winter jackets and sweaters need not be cleaned.

To avoid reinfestation, your doctor may recommend that all affected household members be treated at the same time within the same 24-hour period.

It is not unusual for itching and rash to continue for as long as two to four weeks after treatment. These symptoms may be a temporary reaction to the remains of the mites. This does not mean the Elimite cream did not work or that it needs to be reapplied. If you feel that the itching and rash are excessive or persistent, contact our office.

