

Scabies

Scabies is an intensely itchy rash caused by a mite, *Sarcoptes scabiei*. College living arrangements/communal living provide opportunities for the spread of scabies.

The mites are invisible and burrow through the skin forming small raised red bumps. The burrows may be visible as a thin reddish line; however scratching often obscures the burrow. A characteristic symptom for scabies is that the itching is most intense at night. Typical sites for the rash are between the fingers, at the wrists, armpits, breasts, groin, penis, buttocks, or along the belt-line. There are typically no lesions on the face and scalp.

HOW DO YOU GET SCABIES?

Scabies is transmitted by close physical contact with an infected person. Infrequently, the mites are transmitted through bedding, towels, and clothing. The mites need a living host to survive and can only survive for 24–36 hours off the host. They do not live inside of mattresses or inside of other furniture.

DIAGNOSING CRABS AND SCABIES

Scabies is usually diagnosed by the history and characteristic rash. Digging a sample out of the burrow to identify the mite can be done but it is painful and often doesn't reveal the mite, therefore, not usually necessary to make the diagnosis.

TREATMENTS FOR SCABIES

The most commonly used treatment is a topical cream or lotion, such as permethrin 5% (Elimite®). It is applied to all areas of the skin from the neck to the feet and is washed off after 8-14 hours. Repeat the treatment in 9 days to be sure to kill any mites that may be hatching out at that specific time period. This medication is an insecticide so following instructions exactly is important.

Itching may persist for several weeks after killing the mite because of the skin inflammation. Non-sedating antihistamines, such as loratadine (Claritin®) or cetirizine (Zyrtec®), are recommended during the day; and Benadryl® or Hydroxyzine (Atarax®) can help to control itching at night. Steroid creams can also help. If rash is diffuse, sometimes oral steroids are needed to resolve the rash and itching.

TIPS FOR TREATMENT:

The following precautions will help ensure the successful treatment of scabies and reduce the chances of reinfestations:

- Do not scratch the infected areas.
- Trim fingernails closely. Be sure to get the lotion/cream up under the fingernails, as mites may be there from scratching your skin.
- Persons with whom you have had close physical contact, particularly sexual partners, should be notified and treated if necessary. However, not everyone who has contact will actually get scabies.
- Wash clothes, bedding, and towels in hot water and dry 20 minutes in the dryer. Other options include placing them in plastic bags for at least 3 days or dry cleaning.
- If symptoms continue, return to SHC for a recheck.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.uptodate.com/contents/scabies