

## **SCABIES**

Scabies is an intensely itchy skin rash caused by a tiny mite (bug) that lives on the skin. Since it is only 1/60th of an inch long, the scabies mite is impossible to see without magnification.

The rash usually involves the hands, wrists, breasts, genital area, and waistline. In severe cases, scabies can spread to almost the entire body. Scabies often resembles other rashes and it is difficult to diagnose. The only definite way to prove whether you have scabies is for a special scraping test to be done from the skin. This test is then examined under the microscope.

Scabies is contagious. It is transmitted by close, personal contact. All members of your family and any people you have had close contact with may have to be treated at the same time. Scabies is not spread by clothes or bedding. There is no need to sterilize sheets, towels, blankets or clothing. On the morning after the treatment is used, pillows and sheets should be changed and washed in a normal fashion.

Treatment consists of applying a mite killing topical medication to your skin. This cream should be applied to the entire body from the neck down, not just to the itching areas. Special attention should be paid to the arm pits, breasts, private area, waistline, hands, and under the fingernails. Rub the cream in until it disappears completely. Leave the medication on over night and shower it off in the morning. The medication should remain on your skin for 8 to 24 hours before it is washed off. The treatment is to be repeated in one week. Therefore the medication is used two separate times one week apart. Using the cream more often will not increase the efficacy and it may cause excess skin irritation.

Another treatment for scabies which is very effective is the use of an oral medicine called ivermectin (Stromectol). This is taken in a single dose which is repeated in 10 days. The dosage is usually four or five pills taken all at once. Therefore, your prescription will likely have either 8 or 10 pills in total for two separate dosages. Most people who take this medication have no side effects.

Your itching and rash may continue at a low grade level even though all the mites have been killed. This results from an allergy to the mites and it is called post-scabies dermatitis. Post-scabies dermatitis is not actual scabies but it is an allergic reaction. At times, a different cream is applied to these individual areas for treatment. Do not try to treat it with the mite killing medication.

The itching rash of scabies usually clears up fairly quickly but as noted above, a low grade itching persists for many weeks to up to 2 months. Please be sure to carry out the treatment exactly as I have instructed you and that all other close contacts are treated as well.