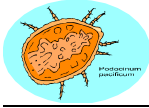


HICMR INFORMATION SHEET 1: NOVEMBER 2008

SCABIES

1. What Is Scabies?

- Scabies is an infestation caused by the microscopic mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*.
- It is found worldwide and affects people from all races and social classes.
- It can spread rapidly in conditions where there is frequent skin-to skin contact between people, eg. Aged care/residential facilities, schools.
- The female mite which is only a few millimetres long, burrows into the top layer of the skin where she lays her eggs. The eggs hatch into larvae after 10-14 days and travel back to the surface of the skin. Female mites live for about 2 months, laying three eggs a day, and travel up to three centimetres a minute.



2. How do you get Scabies and how is it Diagnosed?

- ❖ **How do you get scabies??**
 - By direct, prolonged, skin-skin contact with a person already infested with scabies.
 - Infestation is easily spread to sexual partners and household members.
 - Infestation may also occur by sharing clothes, towels, and bedding.
- ❖ **How is Scabies Diagnosed?**
 - Usually diagnosed by examining the characteristic burrows or rash.
 - Review of scrapings of the burrows with a needle and identifying the mites or eggs under a microscope. (Negative result may not be conclusive).

3. What are the Symptoms of Scabies?

- Pimple-like irritations, burrows or rash of the skin, especially the webbing of the fingers; the folds on the wrist, elbow, or knee; the penis, the breast, or shoulder blades.
- Intense itching, especially at night and over most of the body.
- Sores on the body caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected by bacteria.
- It may take up to 4-6 weeks for the symptoms to develop in people who haven't had scabies before.
- People who have had scabies before, usually develop symptoms within 1-4 days.
- People can pass on the scabies mite until the day after they have commenced their treatment for scabies (24hrs). Scabies can live for two-three days on clothes, bed linen and other personal items.

4. How Is Scabies Treated?

- ✓ Recommended treatments (anti-scabies lotions/creams) include permethrin preparations (Lyclear cream/Quellada lotion – do not use during pregnancy or lactation), or benzyl benzoate 25% preparations (Ascabiol, Benzemul 25%).
- ✓ The anti-scabies preparation should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ The lotion or cream should be applied to the whole body from neck to toes. Avoid contact with eyes/nose/mouth.
- ✓ People are no longer infectious within 24 hrs of treatment, but it can take up to 2 months for the skin lesions and itch to disappear completely.
- ✓ A repeat treatment is advised 14 days after the first treatment for moderate to severe infestations and for contacts who develop symptoms.
- ✓ All household members, visitors and close contacts should be treated simultaneously.

5. Appropriate Precautions Required for Pts with Scabies

- ✚ Contact precautions should be employed for suspected cases until the diagnosis is excluded by skin scrapings, and if confirmed, until 24 hours after appropriate therapy has commenced.
- ✚ As scrapings are not always positive in true cases, therapy may need to be commenced if the clinical suspicion remains high.
- ✚ Close contacts who have had recent contact with cases should be treated simultaneously ie. residents/patients sharing the room, family members, staff members, including agency. (Ideally within the same 24-48 hours period)
- ✚ When crusted (Norwegian) scabies is suspected, a single dose of ivermectin is often prescribed in addition to the anti scabies treatment. Specialist infectious disease or dermatological advice should be sought.
- ✚ Clothes and towels used by the affected persons in the 48 hours prior to treatment should be machined washed in hot water. Linen, blankets and clothing can also 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 week before laundering.
- ✚ Linen and bed linen should be changed daily, bagged and hot washed during and on completion of the treatment.