



# SCABIES



## What is scabies?

Scabies is caused by tiny insects that burrow along in the skin, laying eggs as they go. Above the eggs, small blisters form, surrounded by red patches – these are very itchy.

## Why is it important to treat scabies?

### Scabies will not go away without treatment

- Scratching a lot can lead to serious skin infections.
- Untreated skin infections can lead to kidney and blood infections.
- People who have scabies for a long time can get permanent scarring of the skin. Children scratching a lot find it hard to concentrate and learn.
- Preschool and school teachers can ask that children with untreated scabies be kept at home.

## Who gets it?

- Anyone! Even the cleanest people get scabies.
- Washing in soap and water or swimming in the sea will not prevent or cure it.

## How do you catch it?

- Scabies spreads easily to other people in the family and to their friends.
- Scabies spreads:
  - by close bodily contact, eg, holding hands, hugging, sleeping together
  - by sharing clothes and bedding.
- Scabies does not live in furniture or carpets.

## How do you know you have it?

- Scabies causes a very itchy rash that is worse at bedtime or when you are warm.
- The rash is caused by the scabies mite laying eggs. Small blisters form, surrounded by red patches.
- You may first notice the rash: between fingers, on the wrist, inside elbows, around the waist, on the bottom, or on private parts.
- If someone in the family has scabies, others may have caught it without noticing a rash or itch.
- If you are not sure if you have scabies, talk to a health professional.

# GET RID OF SCABIES

1

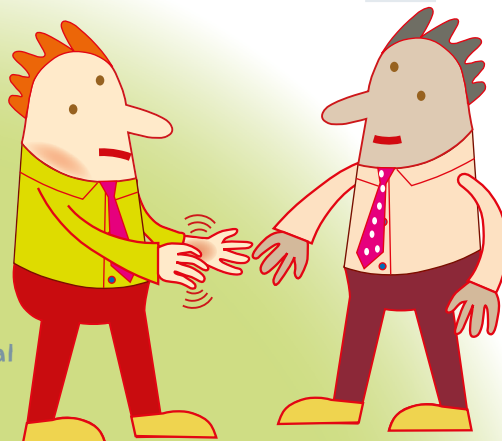
## The Scabies Mite

... gets in your skin and makes you scratch



2

Show the rash to a health professional



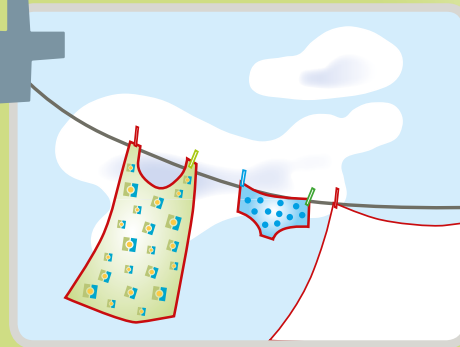
3

On the same day ...



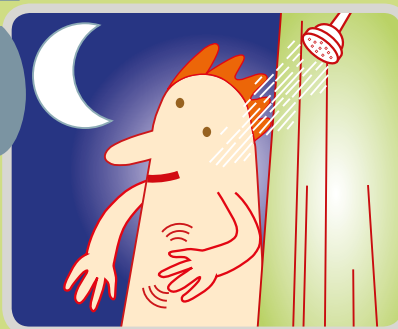
Buy cream from the pharmacy for everyone in the house (See over the page for information about exceptions), or see the doctor for a prescription

4



Wash everyone's clothes and sheets in hot water

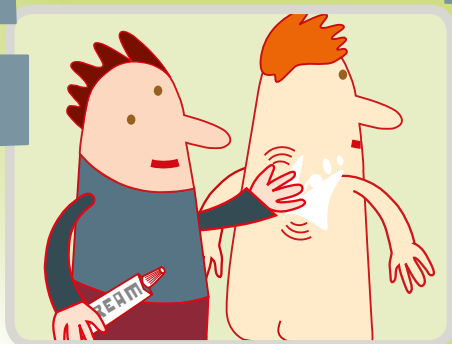
5



If you can, have a bath or shower at night time

6

Rub cream all over the body, from the chin down. Treat everyone in the household on the same day.



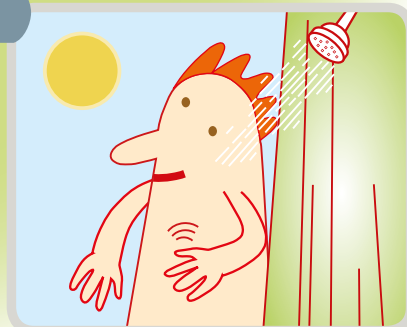
7

Go to bed



8

The next morning ...



Have a bath or shower and put on clean clothes

## How to treat scabies

Everyone living in the house should be treated at the same time even if they are not itchy.

- You will need a special cream or lotion which is available on prescription from your doctor, or which you can buy from a pharmacist.
- Children under two years old and pregnant women might have a different treatment and so you should see a doctor first for advice.

### It is best to treat just before going to bed

#### Scabies will not go away without treatment

1. First have a bath or shower.
2. Then cover the whole body with cream/lotion, from the chin down to the soles of the feet, in between the fingers, under the nails, on the scalp, neck, face, ears and private parts.
3. The cream/lotion must be left on overnight.
4. If you wash your hands within this time, it is important to put the cream/lotion back on your hands.
5. Next morning, have a bath or shower and wear clean clothes.
6. To stop scabies from spreading:
  - All clothes worn against the skin in the last week must be washed in hot water.
  - If clothes cannot be washed, dryclean them or put them in a sealed plastic bag for four days to kill any scabies.
  - Sheets, pillowcases, towels and facecloths should be washed in hot water. It is not necessary to wash blankets, duvets or quilts. You can hang them out in the sun for a day.
  - Your doctor or nurse may advise you to repeat the treatment.

- The itchiness will not go away as soon as the treatment is finished.
- This does not mean that it has not worked. It might take up to four weeks for the itch to go away.
- During this time, you can ask your pharmacist about what is suitable to help the itch.
- One treatment should be enough to cure scabies. If you still have the rash and itch after four weeks, see your doctor. There are other treatments for scabies that only a doctor can prescribe for, or the rash could be something else.

## Prevention

- Children should not attend school or preschool until 24 hours after the first treatment.
- Don't share a bed or clothes with someone who has untreated scabies.

## More information

- Some people may wish to use other remedies. Ask a health professional for advice.



New Zealand Government



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