

Scabies is a mite infestation in the top layer of skin. This small mite burrows into the skin, where it lives, causing a very itchy skin rash. Scabies is not due to poor hygiene. It is very contagious and can be caught by anyone. A pharmacist can advise on safe and effective treatment.

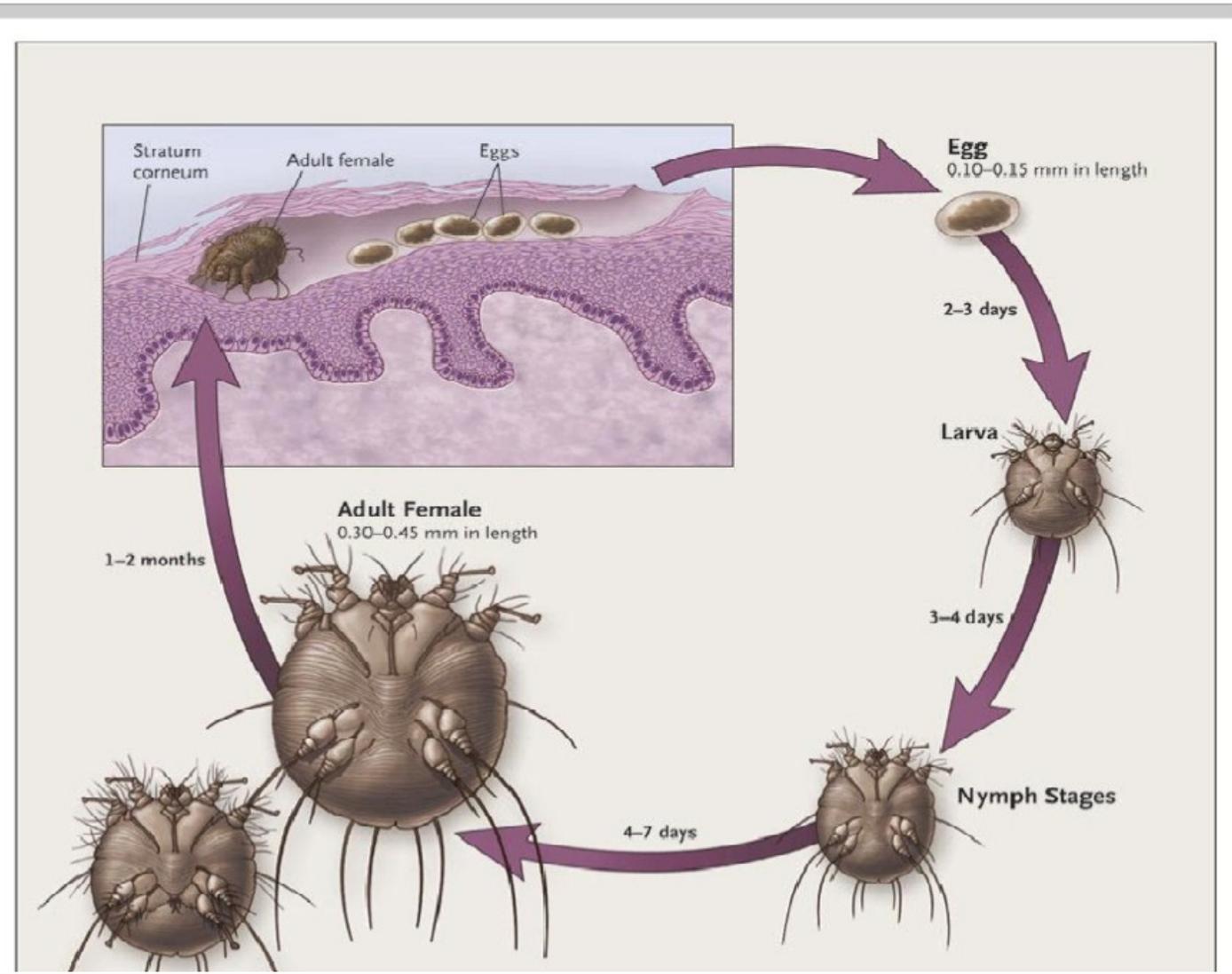


The Scabies Life Cycle Explained.....

Female scabies mites burrow into the top layer of skin, where they lay their eggs. On top of the skin, small itchy blisters and red patches form. This itchy rash is an allergy reaction to the mites and may take several weeks to develop. The scabies mite can only live on people and is different to animal mites.

Scabies is usually caught by skin-to-skin contact with an infested person, but occasionally shared clothing or bedding can spread the mite. Scabies spreads easily between people in the same household and in schools, nursing homes and close knit communities.

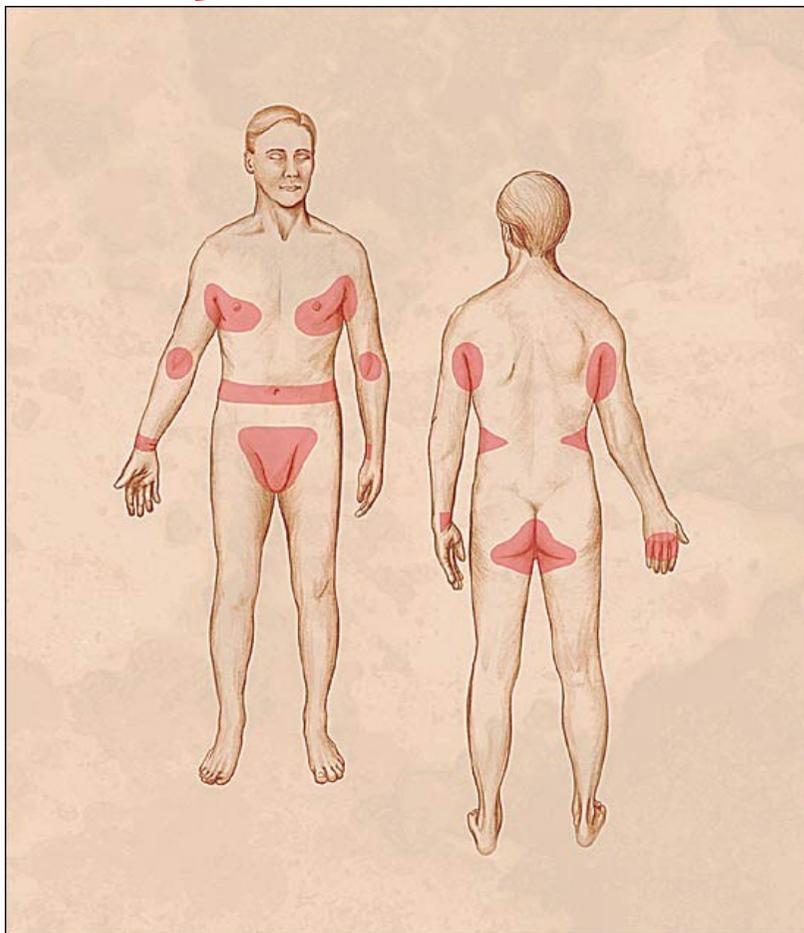
See the diagram to the right 



Signs and symptoms of Scabies

- **Intense itching generally on the trunk and limbs. Itching is worse at night and can disturb sleep. The itch is also often worse when the skin is warm, such as after exercise or a bath or shower.**
 - **Red rash – most often seen on the wrists and hands. Other commonly affected areas are the elbows, armpits, feet, ankles, groin, penis, and women's nipples. Young children often have blisters on the soles and palms.**
 - **Burrows can sometimes be seen as small, thread-like grey or white lines on the skin. The lines are raised, wavy and up to 1 cm long.**
- Scabies can infest the whole body, but the rash may show only in some places. Sometimes the only symptom is itch, with no obvious rash.**

Areas of the body commonly affected by scabies:



Photos/diagrams showing what a scabies rash may look like:



Treating scabies

The scabies mite can usually be killed with a special insecticide-like lotion or cream. The lotion or cream must be applied over the whole body, from the jaw-line to the toes, including areas that are not itchy. If the scabies infestation is above the neck, treatment may also need to be applied to the scalp and face. It is usually best to repeat the treatment after one week, to ensure all mites and eggs have been killed. Improvement usually occurs 1–2 days after treatment. Ask a pharmacist or doctor for advice.

Follow the instructions

There are several different types of anti-scabies products. It is important to follow the specific directions for the product you are using.

General instructions include:

- *Apply the cream or lotion to clean, cool, dry skin*
- *If using a lotion, pour the preparation into a bowl*
- *The treatment may be more easily applied using a clean broad paintbrush, cotton wool or a shaving brush*
- *Start at the chin and apply downwards and outwards over the whole body. Certain people may also need to apply the treatment to their scalp, face and ears. Ask a doctor or pharmacist for advice*
- *Include the soles of the feet, the back, in skin folds, in the belly button, between the buttocks, under breasts and external genital areas. You may need help to apply the treatment to hard-to-reach areas*
- *Finish applying the treatment between the fingers and toes, and under the nails*
- *Leave treatment on for the recommended time and reapply it after washing any area of skin (e.g., hands)*
- *Do not get cream or lotion in the eyes, mouth or nose, or use it on mucous membranes or broken skin.*

Examples of products found in your LiveLife Pharmacy. Please consult your pharmacist to find the most appropriate treatment for you.



Self Care

- *Try not to scratch your skin as this can lead to bacterial infection of the rash.*
- *The skin may stay itchy for several weeks after treatment, even if all the mites have been killed. Sometimes this is a side effect of the treatment. Ask a pharmacist for something to help relieve the itch.*
- *Stop scabies from spreading. Because the itch of scabies can take several weeks to start, people may be infested, but have no symptoms. The infested person and all those who have had close physical contact with the infested person need to be treated. This includes relatives, carers and friends who live in the same house or visit regularly. Treat any sexual contacts as well. It only takes one person to be left untreated and scabies can return. All members of the same household should be treated on the same day.*
- *Wash and dry all bedding, towels, clothing and soft toys on hot machine settings the morning after each treatment. Wash in hot water, or use heat from an iron or a hot clothes dryer. Dry cleaning also kills the mites and eggs.*
- *Any bedding, towels, clothing or soft toys that cannot be washed should be stored in tightly sealed plastic bags for one week (at least 3 days). Mites and eggs will die during this time.*
- *Not all rashes that itch are caused by scabies, so check with a doctor or pharmacist before using a scabies treatment.*

Important

Consult a doctor if:

- **A person needing scabies treatment is pregnant, breastfeeding, a child under two years, frail elderly or has a weakened immune system**
- **Weeping, yellow discharge or yellow crusts develop on the skin, as this may be a sign of bacterial infection of the scabies rash**
- **Itching continues for longer than 3 weeks after treatment.**

Note: If a school age child has scabies, the child should be kept home from school and the school notified. Infected children may return to school after they have had 2 scabies treatments, one week apart.



For More Information

Australasian College of Dermatologists

Website: www.dermcoll.asn.au/public/a-z_of_skin.asp

DermNet NZ

Website: www.dermnetnz.org

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: www.nps.org.au

The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.