



Heartland Dermatology

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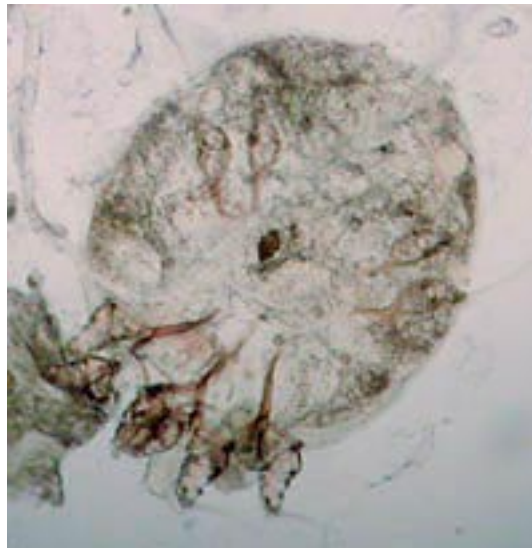
Diseases of the Skin
Phototherapy
Mohs Micrographic Surgery for
difficult or recurrent skin cancers
Laser Surgery
Sclerotherapy
Collagen
Botox
Liposculpture

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Scabies

by V. Angeloni M.D.

Scabies is a mite which lives on human skin. You usually pick this up from someone else who has had it or from an object where a mite has been left behind for you from someone else. The mites burrow into the outer layers of the skin and live there happily until you get allergic to them. At that point life becomes more difficult for both you and the mite, because you get a rash which isn't fun and start scratching the areas where the mites are living (which the mites find very annoying). This rash usually shows up on people as little red spots which are very itchy. The rash is often most prominent between the fingers, on the wrists, under the breasts, around the waistband, but it can be almost anywhere (but usually not above the neck in adults). This problem is not due to insufficient bathing, just bad luck. It usually takes 3-6 weeks for people to get allergic to the mites and for the rash to show up. Other people in the family may have the infestation as well, but may not have itch or rash yet. Although this is contagious, it is not extremely contagious, so it is possible that some family members will not get infested even if the person who is infested has had the infestation for a long time. A typi-



This is a typical scabies mite, viewed under the microscope.

cal example would be a teenager with scabies who has a bedroom in the basement and hardly sees his parents — it is likely that the parents haven't had close enough contact to pick up the mites.

Once you have the rash there are several things that must be done to eliminate it. You must take measures to eliminate mites from the home environment. Usually, this just means that you need to vacuum areas where people sit or change clothes. Dispose of the vacuum bag after doing this. All bedding and clothing which has been worn in the past 72 hours need to be washed in hot water and detergent. If you have lots of "dry clean only" clothing, you don't have to spend a fortune at the dry



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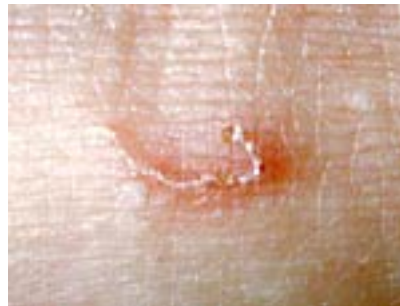
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cleaner. Just take the dry clean only clothes and put them in a garbage bag and tie off the top. Leave the bag closed for at least 5 days — the mites need to feed on humans, so they will die in 3-4 days when off the human host. These environmental measures should be done at the same time you are using the cream on the body that kills the mite. If you wait until the next day to clean your bedding, your infestation may persist. If you are given ELIMITE cream (permethrin cream), this needs to be applied for 6-8 hours, so usually we recommend application before bed and you can wash it off in the morning. You must carefully apply this medicine to every square inch of the skin from the neck down in adults. Miss a spot and you could potentially spare a mite who will then torment you relentlessly. Most importantly, you should scrub beneath the fingernails and make sure that you apply the medication beneath the nails. Other areas you shouldn't forget to apply the medication to include the belly button, between the toes, in the genital region (you don't need to apply this inside the vagina or rectum, just to the external skin). The medication can be a little irritating, but it has very few other side effects. The treatment with Elimite needs



This is a close up of a scabies burrow. The whole burrow is maybe 3mm in length. Most lesions on the body don't show a well-developed burrow like this one!

to be repeated in about 1 week. Elimite can be used safely in children and even in infants or neonates. Please inform your doctor if you are pregnant or breast feeding.

Even though the treatment for scabies is very effective, you will continue to have rash and itching for up to 3-4 weeks after all the mites are dead. You may be given a topical steroid cream to use which will make the rash and itch resolve more quickly.

If you are seeing new lesions 2 weeks after using the medication, you should call the clinic and schedule a followup appointment. It is possible that you may have a persistent infection and will need a microscopic examination of the skin to see if mites are still present.

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