

## **Parasite, Treatment of Scabies Mite (*Sarcoptes Scabei*)**

Itch mites (*Sarcoptes Scabei*), or scabies, is a parasite that can affect anyone after having close contact with someone else who has this common infestation. Clusters of cases, or outbreaks, are seen in nursing homes, schools, institutions and child care centers. All members of society are equally susceptible to scabies.

Scabies is highly contagious, the main symptom of which is severe itching or rash which appears two to six weeks after exposure. The rash is often caused by an allergic reaction to a substance that is secreted beneath the skin by the scabies mites. The rash may often appear to be red blisters or pimple-like irritations often in the webs and sides of the fingers, around the wrists, elbows and armpits, waist, thighs, genitalia and lower buttocks. Itching may lead to open sores and secondary infections.

The scabies mite, which has eight legs and is more closely related to a tick or spider, feeds on a human host and need the host to survive. An adult female scabies mite may live on the host for up to one month. Once removed from the host, the organism will die within 48 to 72 hours. An infected person may have as few as 10 mites on their entire body.

Scabies is transmitted by person-to-person contact. Contact must be fairly prolonged and intimate – sharing a bed, sponge-bathing a patient or resident, or applying body lotions. Scabies mites can also be transmitted via infested bedding and clothing. Although it takes weeks to develop the rash of scabies, infections of others occur as soon as scabies are present on the skin. Other family members, workers, or other patients may be infected before diagnosis of the infected person. Animal scabies is not transmitted from human-to-human, nor can the animal mite reproduce in the human host.

In order to control the infestation of this parasite, the infected person must be treated with over-the-counter or medically prescribed shampoos or lotions by a physician. In addition, the environment of the infected person should be treated. All clothing, bed linens, towels, and personal articles should be thoroughly machine washed in hot water and dried using the hot dryer cycle. Heat is lethal to these parasites and their eggs. Personal items that cannot be washed should be dry-cleaned or placed in a plastic bag for 7 to 10 days. Vacuuming is recommended for all carpets and rugs, upholstered furniture, mattresses and chairs. Uncovered mattresses should not be assigned to new patients/residents for at least 10 days (life span of mites off of the host).

**There are no disinfectants which carry claims against the scabies parasites, as they are associated with the human body and not with hard surfaces.** However, early diagnosis, avoidance of close physical contact with infected individuals, rapid treatment of the infected individual, and proper cleaning procedures is key in controlling the transmission of this parasitic disease.

Ecolab disinfectants are intended to kill or inactivate organisms on hard surfaces such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses. Therefore, the disinfectant products are tested against these microorganisms and are registered in accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection



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Agency (EPA). Hard surface disinfectants do not make claims against the killing of parasites and have not been tested to do so. There are no EPA regulated disinfectants on the market that can make a claim to kill parasites, as standardized test methods are not available for parasites by the EPA.

Proper cleaning is sufficient for the environmental control of parasites. Any environmental control measures should be directed towards interrupting the route of transmission of the scabies parasite.

For additional information provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on scabies mites, access the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), and search the keyword "scabies".