

Management of scabies

Extracted from Appendix L of

Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly (3rd Edition, 2015)

(Last update: August 2019)

1. Management of residents and staff in elderly home

- Staff should closely monitor the conditions of themselves and the residents. Immediate medical advice should be sought when scabies infestation was suspected. If there are several residents and staff diagnosed to have scabies, staff should report to the CHP and SWD.
- During a scabies outbreak, people who are in close contact with the patient, e.g. residents and staff, should apply the anti-scabies medication to prevent the spread of the disease.
- Staff should wear gloves and apron when performing cleaning work or taking care of the infested resident. After direct care, care-givers should change their working clothes and wash their hands thoroughly.

2. Management of the clothing and bed-linen

- Patient's clothing, towels, bed-linen, pillowcase, etc., should be washed separately from those of their family members or other elderly home residents.
- Patient's clothing, bed-linen, pillowcase, etc., must be washed in hot water (60°C or above, for not less than 10 minutes) to get rid of the mite and their eggs.
- Place all non-washable personal items such as shoes, mattress, etc. in a plastic bag and seal them up for at least 7 days before they can be cleaned and used as usual.

3. Medical treatment

Effective medical treatment for scabies includes topical anti-scabies agents (e.g. Benzyl Benzoate or Permethrin) and oral drugs to control itchiness. The followings are instructions on how to use two anti-scabies agents:

How to apply Permethrin Lotion

- After taking a bath, scrub and dry the body thoroughly. With the help of another person, use latex gloves to thoroughly massage the lotion into the skin of the whole body down to the soles (including hairline, forehead, temple, scalp, skin creases like finger webs, toe webs and under the nails), while taking care to avoid contact with the eyes and the mouth. Then put on clean clothes.

- Leave for 8 to 14 hours, take a warm water bath to wash away the medication. Then put on clean clothes and change bed linen.
- Most of the time, a single-dose application would suffice.
- After treatment, the itching may persist. If the itchiness lasts for more than 2 weeks or if there are other changes in the skin, consult your doctor again.
- Aggressive treatment with multiple applications over the entire body may be needed for Norwegian scabies. Please consult the doctor in-charge for instruction and reassessment.

How to apply Benzyl Benzoate Lotion

- In the evening after taking a bath, scrub and dry the body thoroughly. With the help of another person, use latex gloves to massage the lotion from the neck downwards to cover the whole body (finger webs and toe webs should be included, but not the head). Then put on clean clothes.
- On the next morning, repeat the application without taking a bath. Then put back the same clothes.
- On the next evening, take a warm bath and clean the whole body with soap. Put on clean clothes and change bed linen afterwards.
- In between the two applications of the lotion, there is no need to change the clothing or bed linen.
- Only two applications of the lotion suffice to kill the mite (except in Norwegian scabies). Over treatment gives rise to irritation and causes contact dermatitis. Re-apply the lotion to the hands after washing since the previous coating has been removed by water.
- After treatment, the itching may persist. If the itchiness lasts for more than 2 weeks or if there are other changes in the skin, consult your doctor again.
- Aggressive treatment with multiple applications over the entire body at an interval of 2-7 days may be needed for Norwegian scabies. Please consult the doctor in- charge for instruction and reassessment.