

## Educational Bulletin

# Controlling the Spread of Scabies

By Louis Anastasakos  
Professional Development, Wood Wyant



**Scabies is a skin disease caused by an infestation of the human itch mite, which burrows itself under the skin. Scabies can spread rapidly; usually via prolonged skin-to-skin contact with another person. On occasion, it can also be spread indirectly by sharing the clothing or bedding of a scabies-infected person, or by exposing skin to infected furnishings.**

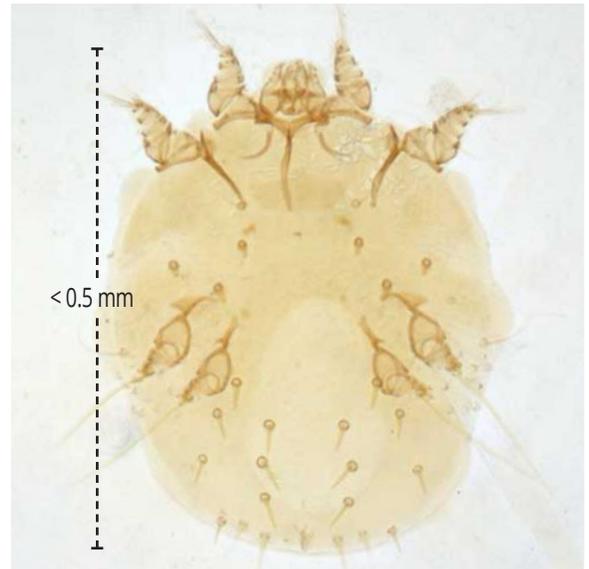
*For more detailed information about this disease and how it is treated in people, please see the References/Web Links at the end of this document.*

It is important to note that infested persons may take weeks to show symptoms but can still pass on the insect through skin-to-skin contact during this time. When a case of scabies is discovered, a thorough outbreak and surveillance plan must immediately be put in place to ensure the infestation is contained and eliminated. This plan must include cohabitants who live in close quarters, care staff and visitors of the infected person. Failure to implement a proper outbreak and surveillance plan can increase the size of the affected population in a residence, hospital or group.

Crusted Scabies is a severe and highly transmissible form of scabies. Even brief skin-to-skin contact or contact with contaminated surfaces can spread the disease. In many institutional settings, prolonged scabies outbreaks are typically due to either the unrecognized presence of individuals with crusted scabies or the inadequate cleaning and treatment for the affected group.

No specific cleaning, laundry or disinfecting chemicals are indicated for preventing the spread of scabies through environmental hard surfaces, fabrics, carpets or upholstery. You can continue to use your normal cleaning, laundry or disinfecting products as usual.

All bedding and clothing used by infected individuals must be laundered in hot water (at least 50 °C) and dried at high heat



to kill the insects. Dry cleaning is also effective at killing insects in clothing. Anyone who has regular skin-to-skin contact with infested persons, as well as those who share a room or live with an infested individual must also be treated, along with their clothing and bedding.

Note that all efforts to decontaminate household items, clothing, bedding, etc. must begin after the affected person(s) begins their treatment regimen.

Any items that come into direct contact with skin but that cannot be washed and dried in the laundry can be shrinkwrapped or placed in an airtight bag for one week, since the mite that causes scabies generally cannot survive away from a host for more than 3 days.

Children and adults can return to school, daycare, work and most other daily activities usually the day after treatment begins and after cleaning protocols for clothing and bedding have been implemented.

# Educational Bulletin

## CRUSTED SCABIES

Crusted scabies is a severe form of scabies. Affected individuals are highly contagious and more aggressive measures than the standard measures are needed to control an outbreak. This includes placing affected individuals in contact isolation.

The steps required for controlling the spread of crusted scabies includes the normal cleaning of hard surfaces that may come into direct contact with skin. Cleaning cloths must be disposed of or laundered according to the above scabies laundry instructions. Dry Vapour Systems for heat-treating fabrics, covered mattresses, furniture and carpets can also help to stop the spread of crusted scabies.

In general, the cleaning, vacuuming/extracting and dry vapour treatment of environmental surfaces — along with standard scabies precautions and measures — are sufficient for stopping crusted scabies from being spread throughout the environment. The widespread use of insecticides for de-infestation through spray or fogging is considered unnecessary by the CDC and is discouraged.



### References:

1. *Parasites – Scabies; Control, CDC, updated November 02, 2010* [http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/health\\_professionals/control.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/health_professionals/control.html)
2. *Parasites – Scabies; Prevention & Control, updated November 02, 2010* <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/prevent.html>
3. *Scabies Fact Sheet, Government of Saskatchewan, February 2013,* <http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=12009>
4. *Ectoparasitic Infections (Pubic Lice, Scabies), Public Health Agency of Canada, updated February 01, 2013,* <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/sti-its/cgsti-lcits/section-5-3-eng.php>
5. *Human Skin Parasites and Delusional Parasitosis, BOHA Museum of Entemology,* <http://delusion.ucdavis.edu/scabies.html>

## About Louis Anastasakos



In 1990, upon receiving an honours degree in Chemistry from McMaster University in the previous year, Louis joined the Sanitation industry as a chemist. Louis was later promoted to the position of Lab Supervisor and then to Development Chemist for Institutional Products. In 1997, Louis joined Wood Wyant in the position of Technical Manager overseeing regulatory affairs, product quality management and product development at the Wyant Chemicals Division. In 2006 Louis shifted to a Marketing / Sales support role within Wood Wyant bringing his technical knowledge to the aid and support of Wood Wyant customers.

Today, as an Expert Sustainability Professional (ESP) of the CGSP program with CIMS I.C.E. – GB Accreditation and a member of the Industrial and Institutional Technical Forum (IITF) of the CSSA, Louis blends his technical background, his global understanding of products and processes and with his love for public speaking to ensure clients are well educated on developing the most efficient and beneficial programs.