

## **Scabies Information and Control Measures**

### **What is Scabies?**

Scabies is a highly communicable skin disease caused by a tiny parasite called a mite. The mite penetrates the skin, causing a rash and intense itching, especially at night. Transfer of the mites occurs by direct skin-to-skin contact. The longer and more frequent the contact, the more likely the transfer. The mite feeds on skin cells and can only move by crawling. Symptoms may not appear for two to six weeks after contact, so the mites may be widespread before they are recognized. The mite does not carry disease, but secondary infection may occur from scratching. Scabies occurs worldwide and affects all socioeconomic groups.

### **How is it Detected?**

The scabies rash may occur as small, scattered, red spots occurring most commonly on the hands and wrists. The elbows, under arms, waist, thighs, abdomen, genitalia, and buttocks can also be affected. The teacher would most likely observe the child scratching frequently. Look for a rash, often with burrows under the skin.

### **How is it Spread?**

By direct, prolonged, skin-to-skin contact with a person already infested with scabies. Infestation may also occur by sharing bedding, clothing, and towels.

### **Case Findings – Administrative Procedure**

When a teacher suspects a suspicious rash, the student will be referred to the school nurse who will confirm the presence of a skin rash.

- The school nurse should notify parents and refer the student to their healthcare provider. Encourage parents to examine siblings for signs of a rash and report to their healthcare provider.
- The school nurse should check other students with symptoms of scabies in the classroom.
- The student may return to school once adequate treatment has been initiated.
- Itching may continue for 2-3 weeks after treatment, but does not mean the student is still infested.
- Confirm treatment has been initiated when the student returns to school. This confirmation may be from the parent/guardian or a doctor's note. If re-treatment is ordered, make a note to recheck the student at the appropriate time.

- Notify the school social worker if the student is absent for an extended period of time for scabies.

### **Control Measures**

- Good hand washing is recommended.
- All household members should be treated to prevent re-infestation.
- Bedding, clothing, and towels should be washed in hot water and dry in a hot dryer.
- Clothing that cannot be laundered should be removed and stored for several weeks, or dry cleaned.

### References

Centers for Disease Control (CDC). (2005, February 10). Parasitic Disease Information. *Scabies Fact Sheet*. Retrieved on 2/2/2007 from the www:

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/scabies/factsht\\_scabies.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/scabies/factsht_scabies.htm)

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA). (2001). Childhealth and Wellness Information Sheet. *The Scoop on Scabies*.

Georgia School Health Resource Manual (2004). *Scabies*. Chapter 4, (page 217). Communicable Diseases and Infection Control.