

Directions for the application of a topical scabicide

Ensure the case and all close contacts are treated at the same time. Always follow the directions on the product label. Although these directions have been developed for use with 5% permethrin and 25% benzyl benzoate topical scabicides, constancy cannot be guaranteed for all products.

Treatment directions

1. Individuals to be treated should have a warm shower or bath with soap, and dry their body prior to treatment. They should also apply clean clothing, bed linen, and only use clean towels etc.
2. Apply permethrin (5%) for 8 hours or benzyl benzoate (25%) for 24 hours, being sure to adhere to the instructions on the label. Permethrin based medications should be applied in the evening and left overnight.
3. Apply thoroughly to all skin from the neck down. Insufficient coverage is the primary cause of treatment failure. Ensure all skin folds are treated including finger webs, toe webs, anal and vaginal clefts, belly buttons and armpits.
4. Fingernails should be trimmed and a thin layer of medication applied beneath the nail using a nailbrush. For infants, mittens applied to the hands will prevent removal and ingestion of the treatment product.
5. If there have been treatment failures, or if treating at risk groups*, the treatment area should be increased to include skin above the neck (avoid contact with eyes and mucous membranes).
6. If the treatment is washed off or otherwise removed (e.g. hand washing or pressure area care) ensure it is reapplied immediately.
7. Once the required time has passed, wash off topical scabicides using soap in a warm shower or bath. Clean clothes and linen should be supplied again after treatment. If treating staff, they can return to work 24 hours after their first treatment.
8. Hot wash (>50°C) all linen and clothing worn in the past 72 hours. Items that can't be washed should be tumble dried or bagged for 72 hours. Surfaces such as furniture and carpets may be disinfested with heat (such as steam) or by physically removing scabies mites (e.g. vacuuming).
9. Repeat the treatment in seven days to kill newly hatched mites. If treatment failure or recurrent infestation is suspected seek medical re-assessment. If a third treatment is required, active infestation with scabies should be confirmed microscopically through a skin scraping or dermoscopy by a medical professional.

*- at risk groups include children younger than two years, the elderly and frail, immune compromised, immobile, institutionalised, and indigenous persons from central and northern Australia

For more information

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