

Patient Information Leaflet: Post-Scabetic Itch

What is Post-Scabetic Itch?

Post-scabetic itch is a condition characterised by persisting itching and discomfort in individuals who have been treated for scabies. It often occurs after the scabies mites have been eliminated but can continue for weeks or even months. This condition is believed to result from the skin's inflammatory response to the mites, their faeces, and residual irritation even after successful treatment. Repeated anti-scabetic treatments can be damaging to the skin barrier and cause dryness, itch and irritation in their own right.

Why Does Post-Scabetic Itch Occur?

During a scabies infestation, the immune system reacts to the presence of the mites, leading to inflammation and itching. After treatment:

- **Skin Sensitivity:** Even after the mites are eliminated, the skin may remain sensitive and reactive.
- **Increased Histamine Release:** The body can continue to release histamines, which trigger itching, even in the absence of the scabies mites.
- **Healing Process:** The skin may take time to heal completely, causing ongoing discomfort.
- **Skin barrier dysfunction:** The scabies topical treatments are harsh chemicals that can alter the skin barrier causing dryness, irritation and itch.

Symptoms:

- Persistent itching that may be severe, especially at night.
- Itching may be more noticeable in previously affected areas where the mites were present.
- Rash or irritation on the skin in the areas previously affected by scabies.
- Nodules, thickened skin, excoriations from scratching may all be seen.

Management and Treatment:

Managing post-scabetic itch focuses on relieving symptoms and facilitating recovery. Consider the following approaches:

1. **Topical Corticosteroids:**
 - Moderate to Potent topical corticosteroids can help reduce inflammation and alleviate itching. Your healthcare provider may prescribe or recommend over-the-counter options depending on the severity of your symptoms.
2. **Antihistamines:**
 - Oral antihistamines, such as cetirizine or hydroxyzine, can help relieve itching and improve sleep if itching is worse at night.
3. **Moisturisers:**
 - Regularly applying fragrance-free anti-itch moisturisers containing lauromacrogols or menthol to the affected areas can help soothe irritated skin and reduce dryness.
4. **Cool Compresses:**
 - Applying cool, damp cloths to itchy areas can provide temporary relief from discomfort.
5. **Avoid Scratching:**
 - It is important to avoid scratching to prevent further skin irritation and secondary infections. Keep nails short and rub rather than scratch.

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Self-Care and Lifestyle Tips:

- **Keep Skin Hydrated:** Use gentle, soap substitutes to wash with and moisturisers to keep the skin well-hydrated.
- **Wear Loose Clothing:** Choose loose-fitting, breathable fabrics to minimise irritation against the skin.
- **Stress Management:** Since stress can exacerbate itching sensations, engaging in relaxation techniques, such as meditation or deep breathing exercises, may help.

When to Seek Medical Advice:

- If itching persists despite treatment and self-care measures.
- If you notice any signs of a secondary infection (such as increased redness, swelling, warmth, or discharge) in areas where you scratch.
- If you have concerns about your symptoms or the need for further evaluation and management.

Conclusion:

Post-scabetic itch can be a frustrating and uncomfortable experience following the resolution of a scabies infestation. With proper management and care, symptoms can be alleviated, and the skin can heal effectively. If symptoms persist or you have any concerns, do not hesitate to consult your healthcare provider for additional guidance and support.

