

What in the world are Scabies?

By Penny Keay

Recently we were asked about a treatment for scabies. Although we knew what they were we had not been asked about 'scabies' for a long time.

For those of you asking the question 'what are scabies?' we will answer this for you and suggest a way to help rid yourself of these little 'buggers' should you or a family member get infected.

Sarcoptes scabiei is the name of the very contagious skin mite. These little mites love to burrow under your skin to lay their eggs. In the process they can cause a lot of discomfort. Itching is the most prevalent allergic type reaction. And it can last for several weeks if left untreated. Because of the intense itchiness the risk of secondary bacterial skin infections is a common threat. And since essential oils are helpful with bacterial infections their use will help.

There are several subspecies of *Sarcoptes* mites. One of which causes mange in wild animals and dogs BUT don't worry the 'Scabies' mite in humans ONLY infects humans and the other species of mites are 'host specific' to those other animals. In other words you cannot get Scabies from your dog, nor can you give it to your dog.

Typically the over the counter preparations for treating scabies is also a pretty strong pesticide. Since this is the case, we are often asked what can be used from the aromatherapy world of essential oils.

There are a few different essential oils that can be used to help get the pests under control with the best known one being Tea Tree.

In her book, *Clinical Aromatherapy Essential Oils in Practice*, Jane Buckles, RN, writes the results of using [Tea tree](#) in a 5% dilution. According to her book, in vitro results showed all adults, larvae etc. were killed within 3 hours.

To make a 5% dilution you would use a carrier oil of your choice such as [Jojoba](#). In 1 tablespoon (15ml or 1/2oz) of [jojoba](#) you would mix 15 drops of tea tree. Apply once a day for several days.

Our suggestion is the [Jojoba](#) as it is readily absorbed into the layers of skin where those little mites are burrowing and causing you grief. [Jojoba](#) will also keep your skin soft.

The rule of thumb for most symptoms is keep applying the blend for 3 – 4 days after everything looks well again. For instance, if you have a lesion and were using the blend and now it looks totally healed and the skin looks 'normal' still use the blend for 3 – 4 days applying once a day.

In most cases of scabies you need to apply once a day (depending on the age of the person) for 10-14 days, if the eggs were hatched a week ago.

If you destroyed the adults yesterday and they laid eggs prior to dying (eggs take 3 weeks to hatch and the eggs are under a couple layers of skin) you would have to apply the blend for a week, take a week break and then start again for about 3 days. By then, hopefully, you would have taken care of all the mites and eggs.

If you are one of the few people that cannot use [Tea Tree oil](#) then you might be able to try any of the following essential oils, again in a make a 3-5% dilution: [Geranium](#), [Citronella](#), [Peppermint](#), [Palmarosa](#), [Lavandin](#), [Eucalytus globulus](#), [Black Pepper](#), [Ginger](#), [Balsam Peru](#), [Anise](#) and [Oregano](#).

Several of the above essential oils should be used at the 2 to 3% dilution as they are rather warm.

If you are going to use the above suggestions on a child remember to dilute to 2% or less. Then apply twice a day. Children are more 'delicate' and essential oils should be used in ½ normal adult strength recipes.

The above suggestions can also be used for a common swimmers itch also caused by a type of skin burrowing insect. 'Chiggers' like to infect swimmers and folks that walk in tall wet grass.

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