

SCABIES IN CHILDREN

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SUMMARY

Scabies is a persistent, contagious pruritic skin eruption caused by cutaneous infestation with the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. Usually parents and children are infected at the same time, because scabies infestations are transmitted mostly by direct contact. The peak incidence of scabies in children, which have been treated at the University Department of Dermatology in Ljubljana from 1990 to 1997, was observed from 1993 to 1995 with approximately 163 cases per year. History, clinical features, and laboratory examinations are important for diagnosis. Clinical features are different in infants and in children, because infant's skin is still immature. The lesions in infants are of a more exudative character. They can be detected almost everywhere on the skin, important sites are soles, palms, face and scalp. Variants of scabies, differential diagnosis and treatment of scabies in children are reviewed. We should consider the diagnosis of scabies whenever the patient has persistent papulovesicular lesions, the itch worsening at night, and there are additional cases involving other persons at home.

KEY WORDS

scabies, children, infants, epidemiology, clinical features, differential diagnosis, treatment, Slovenia

WHAT IS SCABIES?

It is a persistent, contagious pruritic skin eruption caused by cutaneous infestation with the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei* (1,2). The female burrows into the stratum corneum of epidermis, lays her eggs, and dies after one month. The eggs hatch, the new generation matures in 14 days, when the cycle is repeated. The mite and its excrements cause severe pruritus (2).

THE INCIDENCE OF SCABIES IN SLOVENIA

Reliable data on the incidence of scabies in Slovenia are available since 1971 due to the well-organized dermatological care and the reporting system. The peak incidence was reached in 1972 (8646 cases). There was a second peak in 1982 (4412 cases). The yearly incidence of over 1000 cases still

