

# Scabies Testing for Clinicians

## Central Zone

The laboratory requisition form and case reporting references in this resource are zone specific.

## Skin Scraping

*(Adapted from "Management of Scabies in Long Term Care Facilities" 2019 by Winnipeg Regional Health Authority).*

Skin scraping is used with microscopy to identify mites, eggs, and feces (scybala). Negative tests do not rule out an infestation.

## Equipment

- gloves
- magnifying glass (if available)
- light source
- alcohol swabs
- #15 scalpel blades
- sterile collection container, for example a screw-top urine culture container

## Site for Scrapings

Identify recent non-excoriated, non-inflamed, burrows or papules.

- Burrows are most commonly found between the fingers, sides and back of foot, folds on the front of the wrist, umbilicus and waistline, lower half of the buttocks and nearby thighs, back part of the elbow, above the kneecap, front and back of axillae, breasts (skin surrounding the areolae, especially in women), glans and shaft of penis, scrotum, and in infants and young children, on the head, neck, scalp, palms, and soles.

## Procedure

1. Explain the procedure to the patient and perform hand hygiene.
2. Use an alcohol swab to scrub the area to be scraped for 30 seconds and allow to air dry.
3. Don gloves.
4. Scrape the selected area 6-7 times with the scalpel blade until tiny specks of blood appear.
5. Place scrapings on a piece of paper before transferring to the screw-top container, or directly into the container if practical.

## Submission

Please use the [DynaLIFE](#), Central Zone Specific, Microbiology Requisition.

- Under the "Parasites" section, mark the "Parasite/Arthropod Identification (not stool)" box.
- If the specimen is related to a specific outbreak, add the exposure identification (EI) number under the "Provide Relevant Clinical Signs/ Symptoms/ Reason for Testing" section of the requisition.

## Burrow Ink Test

(Adapted from "Management of Scabies in Long Term Care Facilities" 2019 by Winnipeg Regional Health Authority).

The Burrow Ink Test (BIT) can be used as an alternative to skin scrapings to assist with the diagnosis of scabies. It is less invasive and does not require professional training to perform. The ink test does not always identify the presence of scabies mites (which occasionally appear as a tiny dark dot at the end of a track), but it can help identify the mite's track as it burrows. A negative test does not rule out scabies.

### Equipment

- gloves
- alcohol swabs
- dark coloured washable wide-tipped marker

### Site for BIT

See Skin Scraping (page 1).

### Procedure

1. Explain the procedure to the patient and perform hand hygiene.
2. Use the marker to colour over areas of suspected burrows.
3. Wipe off ink with alcohol swabs or alcohol-based hand rub and disposable towel.
  - The alcohol will remove most of the surface ink but will not remove ink taken up by the burrow, thus leaving a dark, irregular (often zig-zag) line indicating the burrow track(s).
  - If the patient has straight lines that take up ink, these may be due to scratching and not the presence of burrowing mites.

## Case Reporting

Please report all cases, including cases which have not been tested, to Environmental [Public Health](#) by email or phone.

- email: [ahs.cz.eph.diseasecontrolteam@ahs.ca](mailto:ahs.cz.eph.diseasecontrolteam@ahs.ca)
- phone 1-866-654-7890