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Itching can be caused by numerous problems. An itchy scalp my be due to dandruff. An itchy body may be due to dry skin. There are also itchy rashes such as hives, eczema and chicken pox. But one cause of itching that no one wants to consider is lice or scabies. But this is always a possibility so it is important that you learn how to recognize the signs of these tiny intruders.

Lice

Head lice are tiny bugs that live on the skin that covers the head. These tiny bugs are spread easily from person to person through close contact. Young schoolchildren are often a target for lice because they play together in close quarters.

Lice can live for up to 30 days on the head of a human. During this 30 days, the female louse can lay about four eggs per day or approximately 88 eggs during her lifetime. The eggs are laid in the hair shaft. The hair behind the ears and at the base of the neck are common places for the eggs to be found.

These tiny creatures are very hard to see. It is best to have a bright light shining on the head or be in direct sunlight. Part the hair down to the scalp and look closely. You will be looking for moving lice and eggs. Lice have flat bodies that are brown or gray in color. They do not have wings, and they cannot jump. The eggs of the louse look like tiny white specks that cling to the hair shaft.

Scabies

Scabies is an infectious skin disease that is caused by a tiny mite. These mites are easily spread by direct contact with infected individuals. The most common places for scabies outbreaks are nursing facilities, child-care centers and nursing homes.

The tiny mites that are responsible for scabies burrow beneath the skin and lay eggs. The burrow resembles a tiny pencil mark. Once the mites burrow under the skin the body can react to their presence by producing a rash with intense itching. The most common areas for the rash and itch are between the fingers, on the hands, wrists, abdomen and genitals.

The good news is there are usually no serious complications from lice or scabies. There are treatments available that can eliminate lice and scabies from your body. Lice treatments can be purchased over the counter.

Treatment for scabies is a prescription cream that is applied to the entire body. Family members should be treated also. All clothing, including sleepwear should be washed in very hot water. The furniture and all carpets need to be vacuumed thoroughly.

Intense itching can be caused by lice or scabies. If you or members of your family are itching a lot and have a rash, it is important that get a correct diagnosis so treatment can be started.

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