

SCABIES SPECIMEN COLLECTION

Equipment and Supplies

- Disposable gloves
- 4 - 6 glass slides (3 inch x 1 inch) and 4 - 6 cover slips (22 mm) per patient
- Slide carriers
- Magnifying lens and light source such as goose neck lamp or high intensity lamp
- Alcohol wipes
- Mineral oil and dropper
- Applicator sticks
- Disposable needles (18 - 20 gauge x 1.5 - 2.0 inches)
- Sterile surgical blades #15 and handle
- Sharps container

Procedure

1. Plan to obtain at least 4 - 6 scrapings per patient from separate locations on the body. Use a separate slide and cover slip for each scraping.
2. It is critical to do a thorough examination of the patient's skin. The use of a hand-held magnification lens and good lighting are often required for identifying lesions to be sampled. Although 80% of mites are found in the webbing between the fingers on the hands, and on the folds of wrists, they can also be found on the shoulders, back, abdomen, elbows, buttocks, axillae, under the breasts, behind the knees, and on the thighs. The mites burrow into the skin, but never below the outer layer of the epidermis, the stratum corneum. Look for burrows, which will appear as serpentine, redline marking tunnels in the skin up to several centimeters long and unexcoriated papules (unscratched bumps) that suggest site of active mites.
3. Sample should be taken from unexcoriated burrows, or intact papules.
4. Label several slides with the patient identifiers and place a small drop of mineral oil in the center of the slides.
5. Place a drop of mineral oil on the lesions to be scraped. Evenly spread the oil over the area to be sampled. A surgical blade with a drop of oil or hypodermic needle may be used to collect the scraping. CAUTION: never re-enter the mineral oil container with any instrument that has been used to collect scrapings.
6. Pull the skin taut. Apply slight pressure while making several scraping passes over the lesion. If using a needle, best results are obtained when the needle is held at a 5-degree to 10-degree angle to the skin surface. A surgical blade may also be used to collect samples. Hold the blade at 90-degrees to the skin surface and lightly scrape the area to be sampled. A small amount of bleeding may occur but will not interfere with the examination.
7. Transfer the skin scrapings from the needle/blade to prepared slides and place one cover slip on each slide.
8. When specimen collection is complete, wipe each area where a scraping was conducted with an alcohol wipe.
9. Place the slides in a slide container with appropriate patient information and send to the laboratory.

Negative findings do not rule out the presence of scabies. Skin scrapings are often negative in classical cases of scabies, but properly collected and prepared specimens will almost always be positive in those with atypical or crusted (Norwegian) scabies.