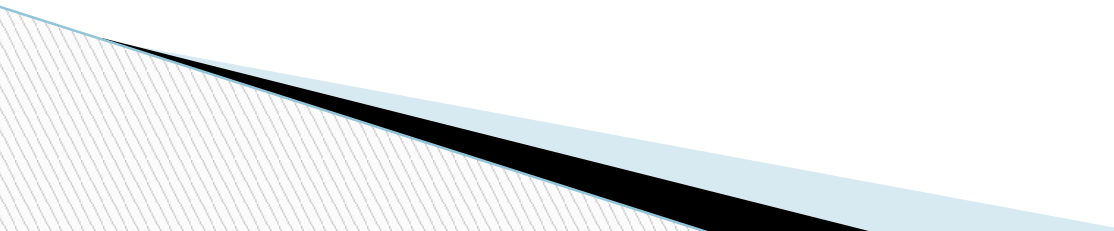


Unit 26
Common Diseases of The Skin

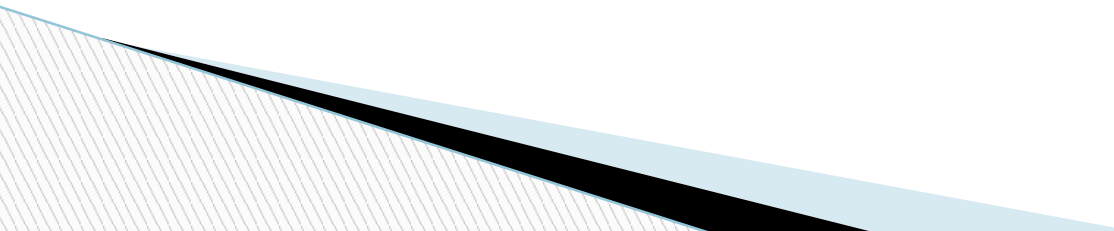
By: Prof. Rekha Sharma Sen

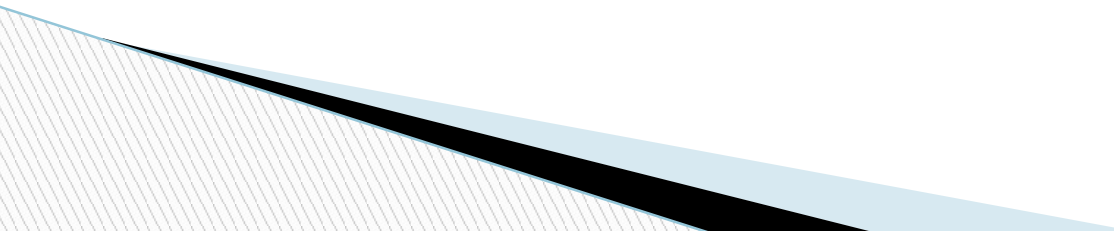


Objectives

- ❑ **Recognize symptoms of skin infections**
 - ❑ **Understand what the symptoms mean**
 - ❑ **Know how to treat simple skin infections**
 - ❑ **Understand when to refer the child to the doctor**
 - ❑ **Explain to parents and children how to take preventive care of the skin**
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The Skin Performs Three Important Functions

- It protects the body from harmful organisms. Due to the covering of the skin, the organisms cannot enter the body.**
 - There are special cells in the skin which are sensitive to the sense of touch, and help us to feel. Because of this, the skin is referred to as one of the sense organs of the body.**
 - The skin also has sweat glands, which help to control body temperature. As you know, when we sweat in hot weather, it makes us feel cool.**
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- **Normally skin is smooth, uniform in colour, covered with small hair.**
 - **Darker or lighter patches , itching, secretion or rash indicate disease.**
 - **If not washed properly and regularly, skin gets infected with organisms present on skin.**
 - **Some skin diseases and infections are only on surface and do not harm rest of the body.**
 - **But other more serious problems affect the skin and other systems eg: leprosy – disease of nerves, first stage is discolouration of skin, second stage – nodules.**
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Symptoms of Some Skin Infections and What They Mean

A skin lesion indicates that there may be some disease.

It is important to know a detailed history of the course of the skin lesion -

— how the lesion occurred, whether there is itching or pain or loss of sensation on the lesion, the distribution of lesions on the skin, their size and colour— to identify the type of skin infection.

The following are the symptoms of lesions which will help you to identify the type of skin infection.

- 1) Itching on lesions:-** This is an important symptom in recognising skin lesions and identifying the disease.
- Itching is very common in fungus, scabies and heat rash.
- In measles and chicken-pox, it occurs at the later stages when the rash is receding.
- In leprosy there is no itching.
- Eczema is characterised by intense itching.

2) **Wet or dry lesions:-** Usually fungal infections and scabies are dry, while eczema is wet and sticky.

3) **Distribution of lesions:-** The part of the body on which the lesion appears helps to identify the infection.

- Scabies, which is the commonest infection of the skin, causes lesions between the fingers, in the armpits, wrists and buttocks.
- Herpes simplex or cold sores occur on the lips.
- Measles starts on the hair line.
- Chicken-pox starts on the body.

4) Size of the lesion:- When there are many small lesions, it is called a 'rash'.

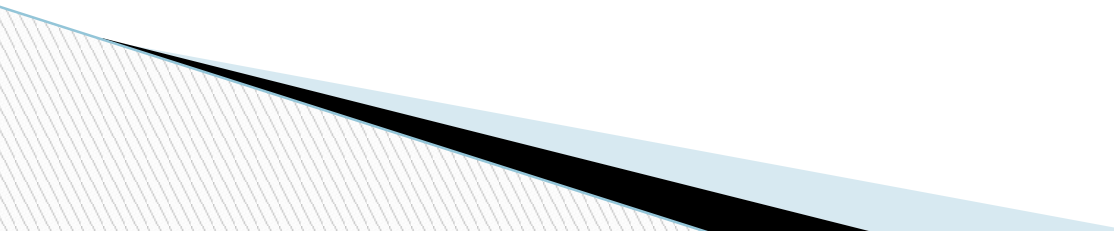
This is seen in measles and heat rash.

In ringworm (fungal infection) and in leprosy, lesions are larger and fewer. These are called 'patches'.

5) Colour of lesion:- They may be red as in rash, or pale as in leprosy.

In fungus, the skin is pale and scaly.

6) Course of the lesion:-

- **Infections like measles and chicken-pox are progressive. That is, they start as flat lesions, and go through a particular sequence.**
 - **In chicken-pox the lesions become bigger and get filled with fluid, which then turn yellow and finally go down, leaving a scar.**
 - **In measles, the rash appears on the fourth day of fever, while in chicken-pox it occurs on the second day of fever.**
 - **Heat rash appears on exposure to heat and is not accompanied by fever.**
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Skin Infections

Some common skin infections, their symptoms, causes and treatment.

❑ Scabies

Symptoms:

- This is the commonest skin infection seen in children.
- It is a highly infectious condition.
- It is characterised by small lesions in the webs of the fingers, wrists, armpits, inside of the thighs and buttocks.
- They are small raised individual lesions and are very itchy. The itchiness increases at night.
- The lesions are dry.

- **As the infection progresses, the lesions join together and because of scratching, become infected.**
- **At this stage, they are yellow and covered with pus.**

Causes: Scabies is caused by a tiny insect that burrows in the skin, and spreads from one person to another through close contact or from clothes.

So the whole family has to be treated at the same time.

Prevention:

- **The children have to be taught to keep the skin clean**
- **Regular baths need to be taken and the clothes have to be washed as often as possible.**

Treatment: Consult the doctor immediately.

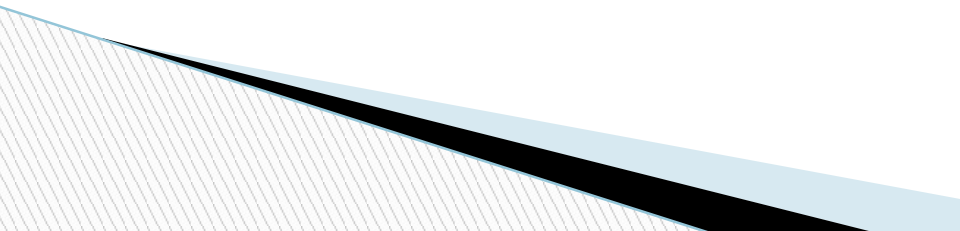
- There is a solution called Benzyl Benzoate which is very effective in controlling the infection. The doctor will most likely prescribe this.
- The solution has to be applied all over the body, except the face, after a good scrub bath. It is better not to wash it off the next day. Instead, apply more solution again.
- After applying this for three consecutive days, on the fourth day, the child is given a bath.

❑ **Skin Ulcers**

Symptoms and Causes:

- **If an ordinary scratch or wound becomes infected, it forms an ulcer.**
- **It may appear on any part of the body.**
- **If the child is malnourished, the ulcer becomes large and does not heal.**

Treatment:

- **Usually, the child tends to meddle with the ulcer and keeps removing the scab (the dry covering on the wound) that forms. This should be prevented.**
 - **The ulcer should be washed clean with permanganate solution and covered with a dry gauze.**
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❑ **Skin Sepsis**

Symptoms and Causes: This means skin is infected by bacteria.

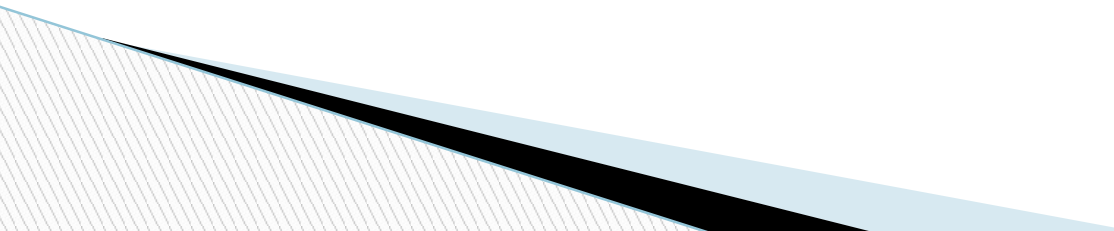
- It can be infection of the hair follicles producing boils on any part of the body.
- Or the bacteria may infect already existing lesions like that of scabies, fungus, chicken pox or wounds.
- This can be life-threatening and has to be treated immediately.
- Septicaemia - infected skin lesions, fever and symptoms of toxicity (i.e., dry tongue, rapid breathing, headache)

□ **Treatment:**

- **Any skin lesion that is infected, has pus or shows redness and swelling, and is accompanied by fever, has to be treated by antibiotics.**
- **Refer to the doctor immediately.**

❑ **Fungus Infections**

Two types of fungal infections of the skin are commonly seen. Fungal infections usually take a long time to heal.

- **One fungus** causes pale patches on the skin, which are usually seen on the chest and back.
 - **They do not cause any symptoms, but spread in hot and humid weather.**
 - **When the child's nutrition improves, the patches disappear.**
 - **The skin should be kept clean and dry.**
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The other infection is called “ringworm”, as it starts as a small dot and grows from the outer edges, in a manner of a ring.

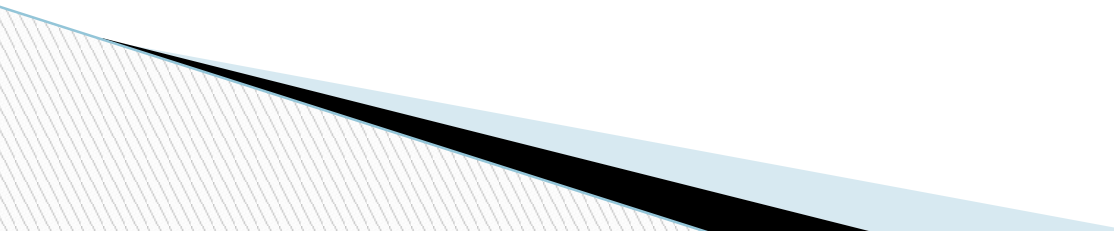
- **The outer edges of the ring become raised and become larger, while the inner part heals. So they look like curved lines or rings.**

Treatment:

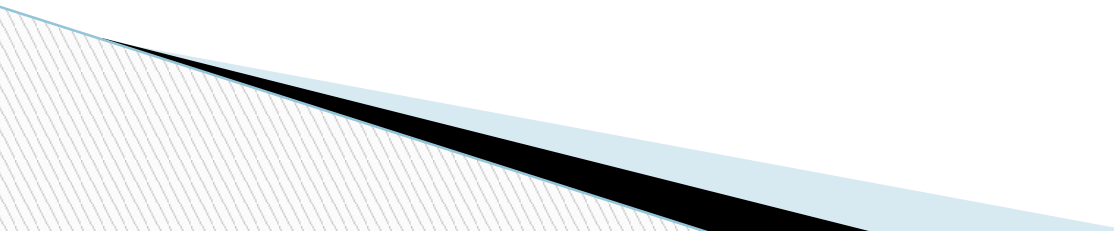
- **Ringworm has to be treated by the application of antifungal ointments.**
- **Refer to doctor for treatment. The clothes should be thoroughly washed and disinfected.**

❑ **Leprosy**

Symptoms and Causes:

- **Leprosy is caused by a bacterium like the one that causes tuberculosis.**
 - **At times, it is considered to be a curse of the Gods, and when people lose their fingers or toes, they are isolated and society does not accept them.**
 - **Such a harsh attitude towards leprosy patients is uncalled for.**
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Treatment:

- **If you suspect leprosy in any child, refer to a hospital for tests.**
 - **If there is a pale patch which does not itch, and there is no sensation of touch, it could be leprosy.**
 - **There are many new medicines for leprosy and, if taken over a period, it is completely curable. There is no need to isolate the child, as it is not infective through casual contact.**
 - **The child should be accepted in the centre, and given proper treatment.**
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❑ **Virus Infections**

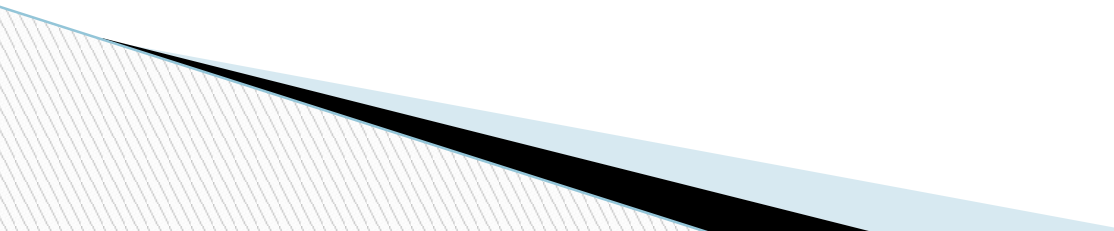
The following are some infections caused by virus.

a) Herpes Simplex:

- **Sometimes, when the child has fever or a cold, she may get small lesions around the mouth and nose.**
- **These are at first, red and painful, but later turn yellow and then form a crust and heal. This is called a “cold sore” or “Herpes simplex”**
- **Usually no treatment is needed except for application of 1% Gentian Violet on the sores.**

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b) Herpes Zoster:

- **This is caused by the chicken pox virus.**
 - **However, unlike chickenpox, which appears all over the body, herpes zoster affects the skin along the distribution of only one nerve.**
 - **Depending on which nerve is affected, the lesions appear on that part of the skin. The lesions are very painful.**
 - **The pain starts before the lesions appear and lasts long after the lesions have healed.**
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- **Herpes zoster usually affects one of the nerves on the chest. So the lesions appear around the chest on one side — from the middle of the chest in the front to the middle of the back.**
- **The lesions go through the stages of macule, papule, vesicle, round half the body.**

Treatment:

- **Refer to doctor.**
- **Handle the child in the same way as you would a child who has chicken pox.**

c) Chicken-pox and Measles:

These have been dealt with in Unit14.

d) Warts:

- **This virus infection causes small, raised, smooth lesions with a depression in the middle.**
- **This infection spreads easily. It is commonly seen on the hands, face, neck and thighs.**
- **They last for a long time but produce no other symptoms. They are not painful.**

Treatment:

- **There is no particular treatment for this.**
 - **They heal by themselves.**
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☐ Head and Body Lice

These are small insects that live in the hair, and deposit their eggs on the hair, which are called “nits”.

Symptoms:

- **Lice makes the scalp very itchy.**
- **Severe infestation makes the child drowsy.**
- **If the infestation is more, it spreads to the hair in the body, like the eyebrows and eyelashes.**

Treatment :

- **Apply medicine to the scalp that is recommended for hair lice.**
- **When the medicine or shampoo is applied, the lice become unable to move. They have to be combed out and the hair washed clean.**

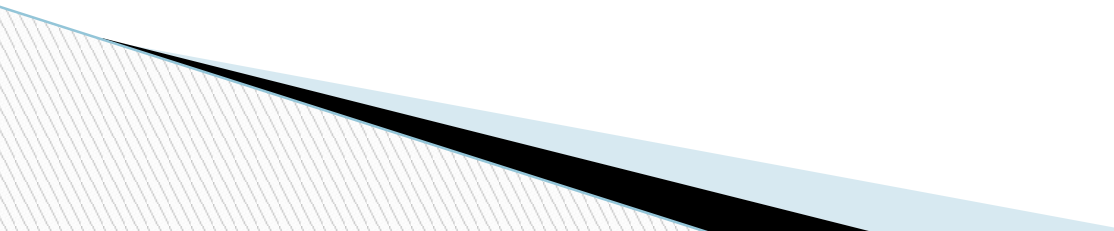
Other Skin Conditions

❑ Heat Rash

Symptoms and Causes:

- This is also called "prickly heat", and is caused by blocking of the sweat glands in very hot weather.
- The skin feels prickly and is intensely itchy.
- This occurs commonly on the chest, back, neck and forehead.

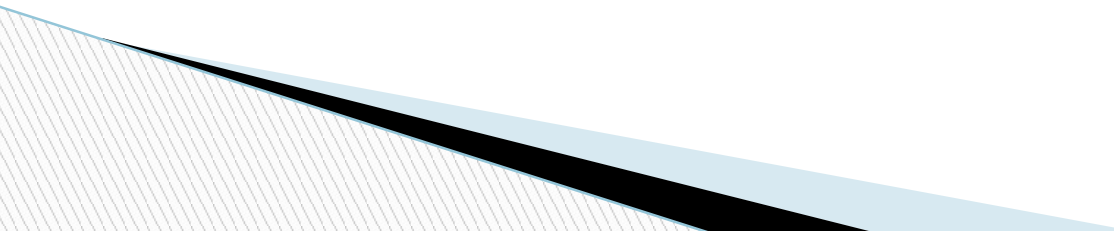
Treatment :

- The skin has to be kept cool and some talc may relieve the itching.
 - Use of pure cotton clothing is recommended.
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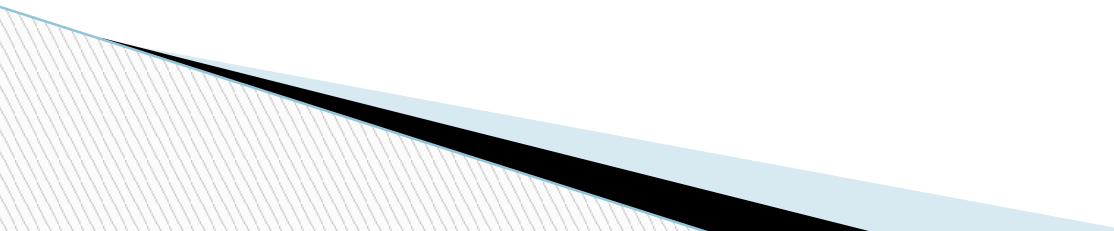
❑ **Eczema**

This is an allergic skin condition.

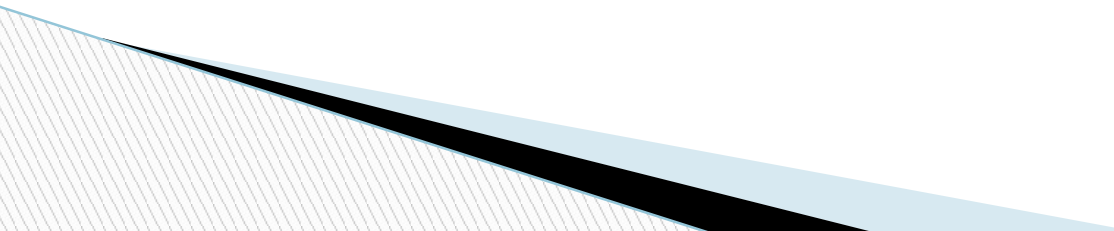
Symptoms:

- **It causes symmetrical patches on the body (same on both sides of the body).**
 - **The patches are itchy and red.**
 - **The eczema may be dry and very itchy, forming black patches on the skin.**
 - **Or due to severe scratching, the serum starts oozing from the skin and it becomes "wet eczema".**
 - **They may also become infected due to scratching.**
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Causes:

- As you know, eczema is an allergic condition. It may be caused by dust, pollen or some foods.**
 - A careful history has to be taken to find out the cause.**
 - When children have allergic reactions, they may have asthmatic attacks and eczema — with both occurring at the same time, or alternately i.e., when the skin is better the asthma is worse, and when the asthma is better, the eczema gets worse.**
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Treatment:

- **Refer to child to the doctor.**
 - **The child will be given some anti-allergic medicines, and some ointment for local application.**
 - **The cause of allergy, like some item of food, or pollen or dust, should be identified and avoided to prevent spread.**
 - **It is better not to apply harsh soaps on the lesions, but soap can be used on the rest of the body.**
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Urticaria

This is an acute allergic condition of the skin.

Symptoms and Causes:

- **It is usually caused by insect bites or due to intake of certain food/medicines the patient is sensitive to.**
- **The symptoms are redness and swelling of the skin. Sometimes, the swelling is over a large area and looks like a bump.**
- **It lasts for a short time, and does not become septic.**

Treatment:

- **Giving anti-allergic medicines prescribed by the doctor, helps.**

❑ **Leucoderma**

Symptoms

This is a condition where there are white patches on the skin.

They can be of any size, and of any distribution (i.e., anywhere in the body).

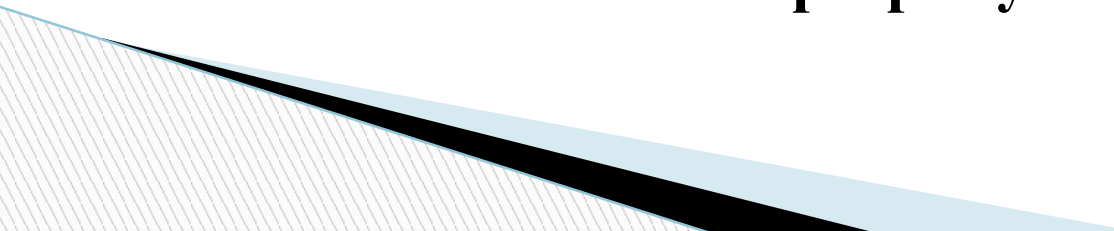
There is no pain or itching on these patches.

They are caused by the absence of pigmentation in the skin.

They do not lead to any other problem, other than affecting the appearance.

The cause is unknown and there is no treatment.

Preventive Care of the Skin

- **Most skin problems can be prevented if the skin is kept clean by regular baths and wearing clean clothes.**
 - **Harsh detergents and other chemicals that harm the skin should not be used for cleaning.**
 - **Skin infections should be immediately treated to prevent spread.**
 - **Exposure to infections like leprosy should be noted.**
 - **If the child lives in an area or family where skin infections are common, then the child has chances of catching the infection.**
 - **Take the necessary steps to prevent skin infection by treating the whole family.**
 - **Their clothes have to be properly washed.**
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Thank You