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Clove Oil for Scabies Bites

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Thinking about the long season of bites and stings that lies ahead of us made me particularly interested in a recent Australian lab study that found that simple clove oil is a match for those nasty little demons known as scabies mites (*Sarcoptes scabiei*). These “itch mites” burrow into human skin, causing an allergic reaction and severe itching. There has been a recent wave of scabies infestations in the US, typically in nursing homes, day-care centers and other institutions. Lesions formed by scratching can lead to infections.

Yikes. I perked up when I saw that Australian study, because it found that essential clove oil kills scabies mites within 15 minutes. Until now, treatment has included medications such as *lindane*, whose side effects include swelling of the mouth and tongue... difficulty breathing... dizziness... and vomiting. Superceding lindane, *permethrin* currently is the most widely prescribed medication for the mites. It has fewer side effects, though it also can cause allergic reactions, and an application of the ointment must be left on for eight to 14 hours. Against such a backdrop, whatever help simple clove oil may be able to provide sounds like something of a miracle! Researchers are looking into incorporating clove oil into a new topical medication, though that still is in the works. This would be a welcome relief because the mites are becoming increasingly resistant to the medications currently available.

To discuss what one can do right now, I contacted Laurie Steelsmith, ND, who practices naturopathic and Chinese medicines in Honolulu. Dr. Steelsmith says that clove oil does indeed dispatch mites and that you can find clove oil in some mosquito repellents as well. As a bonus, the oil helps soothe the pain and itch of bites, and with its antimicrobial properties, it also sanitizes the skin. But before using, she cautions that it is crucial to make a modification to the oil.

DILUTE FIRST

Clove oil is very strong and much too irritating to put on skin undiluted, says Dr. Steelsmith. *Here is how to dilute:*

- Get a second oil for diluting. Dr. Steelsmith likes almond, olive or coconut oil.
- Place two drops of essential clove oil into one tablespoon of the second oil and mix.
- If you have particularly sensitive skin, slightly increase the amount of the diluting oil.

To apply the diluted clove oil, dampen a cotton ball with it and dab or hold the cotton ball against your bite. Reapply daily for three weeks to the affected areas. Wash your hands thoroughly afterward to prevent getting any oil in or near your eyes. Some people may find even diluted clove oil irritating, so it's a good idea first to test a very small amount on the inside of one arm to see if there is a reaction before applying it to larger areas of your body.

Source: Laurie Steelsmith, ND, practices naturopathic and Chinese medicines in Honolulu, and author of *[Natural Choices for Women's Health](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/140004796X/bottlinepubl-20)* (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/140004796X/bottlinepubl-20>) (Three Rivers).

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