



Healthy Skin Program

What is the Healthy Skin Program about?

The goal of the Healthy Skin Program is to reduce scabies and skin sores in Indigenous communities, and reduce the impact of associated chronic diseases, including rheumatic fever and renal disease. The Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) is doing this by working with communities, health care professionals, governments and researchers in a determined effort to rid Aboriginal communities of endemic skin infections and underlying scabies.

Why Healthy Skin?

In some communities, up to 70% of Aboriginal children can have scabies and/or skin sores. The CRAH has supported a long term program of work which, with community-based education and health promotion activity, has been able to reduce scabies from 30% to as little as 5% in the short term, with associated dramatic reductions in skin sore severity and prevalence. If skin infections of this sort can be controlled, other diseases linked to scabies - such as rheumatic heart disease and renal disease - may also be reduced.

An holistic approach to health

The CRAH takes an holistic approach to health. We know that medical treatments alone are unlikely to provide solutions in Aboriginal health. Poverty, lack of infrastructure such as water and housing, and the strength and wellness of communities as a whole, are equally important. The CRAH's work focuses on comprehensive primary health care and primary prevention, but also includes biomedical research to understand more about how scabies and skin sores can be treated and controlled. We know that to achieve sustainable change, we must also support capacity development at the community level, as well as among the workforce and in the research world.

Making sure research makes a difference

CRAH research must also show that it is going to make a real difference to the health of Aboriginal people. We involve governments and health services in the research to make sure it is going to deliver solutions they can use. There is also a Healthy Skin network where you can find out more or exchange ideas.

