Skin scraping
Skin scrapings are done to achieve laboratory confirmation of a scabies infestation. They may be done by a dermatologist or a trained professional. A ‘negative’ result does not always imply that mites are not present; as with any communicable disease, lab results must be collaborated with clinical presentation.

Equipment:
1. Gloves
2. Magnifying glass
3. Light source
4. Alcohol swabs
5. #15 scalpel blades
6. Glass slide

Procedure:
1. Shoulders, back and abdomen are choice areas in the elderly. Other sites: hands, wrists, elbows, feet, ankles, buttocks, axillae, knees, thighs and breasts
2. Use magnifying glass to identify recent burrows or papules. A bright light and magnifying glass will assist in visualizing the mite (tiny dark speck) at the end of the burrow
3. Explain the procedure to the resident and perform hand hygiene
4. Using an alcohol swab scrub the area to be scraped for 30 seconds and allow to air dry
5. Apply a single drop of mineral oil over unexcoriated burrow
6. Don gloves
7. Scrape non excoriated, non inflamed areas (burrows) 6-7 times with a #15 scalpel blade until tiny specks of blood appear. The mineral oil will emulsify the scrapings
8. Using the blade put the emulsified scrapings on a slide; cover the slide with a cover slip
9. Send covered slide with a completed requisition to the Cadham laboratory for diagnostic purposes

Burrow Ink Test (BIT)
The BIT can be used as an alternative to skin scrapings to assist with the diagnosis of scabies. It is less invasive and does not require professional training to perform. The ink test does not always identify the presence of scabies mites (which occasionally appear as a tiny dark dot at the end of a track), but it can help illuminate the tracking caused by the mite as it burrows. As with any diagnostic test, results must be collaborated with clinical presentation.

Equipment:
1. Gloves
2. Alcohol swabs
3. Dark colored washable wide-tipped marker

Procedure:
1. Explain the procedure to the resident and perform hand hygiene
2. Use the marker to ‘color’ over areas of suspected burrows
3. Wipe off ink with alcohol swabs or alcohol based hand rub and disposable towel

The alcohol will remove the most surface ink but will not remove the ink taken up by the burrow, thus leaving a dark irregular (often zig-zag) line illuminating the burrow track(s). If the resident has straight lines that take up ink these may be due to scratching and not the presence of burrowing mites.