

Hand Protection for Hand Dermatitis

Hand dermatitis or hand eczema is common. Hand rashes usually result from a combination of: 1. sensitive skin and, 2. irritation or allergy from materials touched. Everyone's hands routinely touch irritating soaps and detergents several times a day. Add the raw foods, solvents, paints, oils, greases, acids, glues and so on that most of us touch at work or in the home and you can see that the skin of your hands takes a beating.

Not everyone gets hand dermatitis. Many lucky people have "tough" skin but, unfortunately, some people have skin that is easily damaged and the result is dermatitis. People with hand dermatitis often have dermatitis elsewhere and frequently blood relatives have hand dermatitis. We can't toughen your skin, but we have effective treatments to heal your dermatitis.

Skin protection is an important part of treatment. This instruction sheet gives you detailed directions on how to protect your hands. Please read it carefully everyday for a week to fix these instructions in your mind.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Protect your hands from direct contact with soaps, detergents, scouring powders and similar irritating chemicals by wearing waterproof heavy-duty vinyl gloves. Heavy-duty vinyl gloves (such as Allerderm brand) are better than rubber gloves since you may become allergic to rubber. Heavy-duty vinyl gloves are usually available at paint and hardware stores. Buy four or five pairs so they can be conveniently located in the kitchen, bath, and laundry areas. If a glove develops a hole *discard it immediately!* Wearing a glove with a hole is worse than wearing no gloves at all.
2. The waterproof heavy-duty vinyl gloves are particularly helpful with a cotton glove liner to absorb perspiration. You should have several pairs of cotton gloves to change when damp.
3. Wear waterproof gloves while peeling and squeezing lemons, oranges, or grapefruit and while peeling potatoes and handling tomatoes.
4. Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves when doing dry work and gardening. Dirty your gloves, not your hands. If you keep house for your family, scatter a dozen pairs of cheap, cotton gloves about your home and use them while doing dry housework. When they get dirty, put them in the washing machine. Wash your gloves, not your hands.
5. If you have an automatic dishwasher, use it as much as possible. If you don't, let a member of your family do the dishes. Do your laundry by machine, not by hand.

6. Avoid direct contact with turpentine, paint thinner, paints and floor, furniture, metal and shoe polishes as they contain irritating solvents. When using them, use heavy-duty, waterproof gloves.

7. When washing your hands use lukewarm water and very little mild soap. Rinse the soap off carefully and dry gently. All soaps are irritating. No soap is "gentle to your skin" except in the mind of advertising writers. Therefore, don't waste your money on special soaps or "soap-free" cleansers. I recommend Dove, Tone, or Purpose soaps.

8. Rings often worsen dermatitis by trapping irritating materials beneath them. Remove your rings when doing housework and before washing your hands.

9. When outdoors in cold or windy weather, wear gloves to protect your hands from drying and chapping.

10. Use only the prescribed medications and lubricants. Do not use lotions, creams or other medications as they may irritate your skin.

11. Protect your hands for at least four months *after* your dermatitis has healed. It takes a long time for skin to recover and unless you are careful, the dermatitis may recur.

There is no fast, "magic" treatment for hand dermatitis. Your skin must be given a rest from irritation. Please follow these instructions carefully.

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