



HAND PROTECTION FOR PATIENTS WITH HAND DERMATITIS

DEFINITION

Hand dermatitis is a common condition characterized by red, dry, scaly hands which may crack, bleed, itch, or form small water blisters. Most hand rashes result from a combination of unusually sensitive skin and irritation or allergic reaction from material the hands touch each day. Patients with hand dermatitis often have a history of dermatitis or eczema elsewhere on the body; frequently, there is also a family history of dermatitis. We cannot give you “tougher” skin, but there are effective medicines to help heal the dermatitis and decrease its chance of recurrence. Regardless of the cause of your hand dermatitis, **hand protection** is a key component of your treatment. It is important to protect your skin from contact with irritating and sensitizing materials. This instruction sheet gives detailed directions on how to minimize irritation and improve the health of your skin.

HAND CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Protect your hands from direct contact with soaps, detergents, scouring powders, and similar harsh chemicals by wearing waterproof heavy duty vinyl gloves. **Heavy duty vinyl gloves** (such as **Allerderm** brand) are preferable to rubber gloves and are available at paint stores, hardware stores, and some pharmacies. When you find your proper size, purchase four or five pairs so that they can be conveniently located in the kitchen, bathroom, garage, or workroom. If a glove develops a hole, discard it at once.
- 2) Waterproof heavy duty vinyl gloves can be lined or unlined. Either way, you must also wear cotton or other cloth gloves under the vinyl gloves to absorb sweat and moisture from your hands. **Dermal gloves**, which may be ordered from your pharmacist, are an inexpensive brand of plain, thin, white cotton gloves that are excellent for this purpose. If you apply a cortisone medicine thinly to your dermatitis before putting on the cotton gloves, the moisturizing effect of sweating in the glove will make the medicine more effective.
- 3) Wear waterproof gloves when handling fruits and vegetables. Peeling or squeezing oranges, lemons, or grapefruit, peeling potatoes, and handling tomatoes and onions, for example, will worsen your hand dermatitis. Wear gloves when handling all types of meats.
- 4) Avoid direct contact with turpentine, paint thinner, metal polish, floor polish, furniture polish, and shoe polish as they all contain irritating solvents. You should wear heavy duty waterproof gloves when using them. All cleaning products, soaps, cleansers, bleach, and in general, **anything that is wet**, will worsen your hands.
- 5) Wear heavy duty cotton gloves when doing dry work. When these get soiled, exchange them for a clean pair. This way, you wash your gloves, not your hands!

- 6) **Dermal gloves**, available at most pharmacies, should be worn as much as possible throughout the day. They will protect your hands from irritants and prevent your medicine and moisturizer from wiping off. The tips of the gloves may be cut off if your fingertips are free of inflammation, allowing you to perform fine work more easily.
- 7) When washing your hands, use lukewarm water and a very small amount of mild soap. Be sure to rinse the soap off completely and dry gently. All soaps are irritating. Neutrogena, Dove, Basis, Purpose, and CeraVe cleanser are recommended because they are less irritating than others. These are available at your drugstore without a prescription. Keep this special soap available at each place you wash your hands at home and at work.
- 8) Rings often aggravate dermatitis by trapping irritating materials beneath them. Consequently, rings should not be worn during housework or other work with your hands. Avoid washing your hands with soap when wearing a ring as soaps and detergents tend to accumulate under rings and cause irritation. Be sure to take your rings off and wipe the skin under the rings completely dry whenever it gets wet.
- 9) Protect your hands from drying and chapping in cold or wintery weather by wearing leather gloves.
- 10) If we have not suggested specific moisturizers for you, you may use Neutrogena hand cream, Eucerin, Aveeno, CeraVe, Complex 15, DML forte, Carmol 20 cream, LacHydrin 5, or any other fragrance-free moisturizer several times during the day, especially after hand washing.
- 11) Use only the prescribed medicines and suggested moisturizers on your hands. Do not use other lotions, creams, herbs, oils, or medicines unless you clear them with your doctor. Many over-the-counter remedies may severely aggravate your rash.
- 12) It is necessary to protect your hands from irritants for at least four months after your dermatitis has healed. It takes a long time for skin to return to its normal state. Continue to use gentle skin care with mild soap and moisturizers and avoid irritating substances as dermatitis tends to recur.
- 13) **There is no magic treatment or quick fix for hand dermatitis.** The condition tends to be chronic and worse in winter weather or with excessive exposure to contacts and irritants. Follow our instructions carefully--you can improve your dermatitis and prevent recurrence by avoiding irritation and protecting your skin.

