

Did You Know?

By law your employer should:

- Provide a safe and healthy workplace
- Provide training for the job
- Encourage you to report hazards
- Provide the right protection such as gloves
- Inform you about workers' compensation

The law requires that you must:

- Follow safety rules and attend safety training
- Report unsafe work practices
- Report any skin problems or other injuries as soon as possible
- Wear protective clothing which is provided
- Keep work areas clean and tidy

Australian Capital Territory
www.workcover.act.gov.au

South Australia
www.workcover.com

New South Wales
www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Tasmania
www.workcover.tas.gov.au

Northern Territory
www.worksafe.nt.gov.au

Victoria
www.workcover.vic.gov.au

OASCC
www.detailstocome.com.au

Western Australia
www.workcover.wa.gov.au

Queensland
www.workcover.qld.gov.au

This publication was partially funded by the Office of the Australian Safety and Compensation Council and by the Department of Health and Ageing

Healthcare

Some HANDY advice for the future Healthcare worker...



Healthcare workers include:

- Nurses
- Doctors
- Dentists and dental assistants
- Ambulance officers
- Health & lab technicians
- Allied health professionals, including physiotherapists and speech pathologists
- Personal care attendants
- Hospital porters

What is dermatitis?

Work-related dermatitis is a skin condition caused by things that people touch at work. The hands are most commonly affected.

Dermatitis affecting healthcare workers:

- **Irritant contact dermatitis** - caused by things that dry out or damage the skin. These include repeated hand washing with soap. Also sweating from wearing gloves for long periods of time.

- **Allergic contact dermatitis** - occurs when someone becomes allergic to something they touch at work. Allergic dermatitis shows up hours or days after contact. Common causes are ingredients in hand cleansers.
- **Contact urticaria** - also an allergy to something contacted at work. The reaction starts immediately after touching it (normally within 30 minutes). Latex gloves are a common cause.



Prevent skin problems at work

- Apply moisturising cream. Do this at the start, middle and end of your shift and before bed. Sorbolene cream is best
- Wear powder-free gloves
- Dry your hands properly, especially between the fingers
- Take rings off at work, as soap and water can get trapped underneath, causing dermatitis.



Remember ...You are at high risk of dermatitis, if you have a history of eczema, asthma or hay fever, even if you haven't had it since you were a baby.

Case Study

Sarah – Nursing student

Sarah was a 19 year-old nursing student, in the second year of her nursing course.

While on her nursing practical placement, she noticed that her hands became very dry. A month later she developed dermatitis which was painful and ugly. Her hands then became itchy and red after wearing latex gloves.

Sarah had eczema as a baby.

Finally she went to her doctor and after testing, it was found that she was allergic to one of the hand washes used at the hospital and also to latex gloves. Sarah started wearing a different type of glove and used a different hand wash. She also began to use moisturiser, especially in the morning and at night. Her hands then started to get better.

Sarah needs to continue this skin care routine so she can continue nursing. She has to tell her doctor and dentist of her allergy, as they often wear latex gloves.

She also needs to avoid latex, found in balloons, rubber products and condoms.

Points to learn from Sarah's case

Sarah may have been able to prevent this skin problem if she:

- Used moisturiser every day
- Spoke to her boss as soon as her hands became dry
- Saw her doctor earlier

Stop this from happening to you