

Irritant contact dermatitis

Irritant contact dermatitis is the most common type of dermatitis. Usually irritant contact dermatitis builds up over time, after regular exposure to skin irritants.

Skin dryness is usually the first sign and often starts in the web spaces between the fingers.



Example of irritant contact dermatitis

The most common causes of irritant contact dermatitis are:

- Water and 'wet work' e.g. frequent hand washing, dishwashing, food preparation, patient bathing and repeated shampooing (for hairdressers)
- Soaps and detergent
- Heat and sweating
- Dusts and fibres
- Chemicals such as solvents and thinners
- Grease, oils, fuels

The skin may take months to heal, even once it looks like it has returned to normal.

People working in the following industries, especially those jobs which involve lots of 'wet work' and frequent contact with chemicals, are at highest risk. These include:

- Food handling
- Hair and beauty
- Healthcare
- Mechanical and metal working and
- Construction