

Are your hands dry, red, itchy, sore or sting when following hand hygiene? Do you have contact dermatitis?

Practical steps for healthcare workers with contact dermatitis

Report skin problem to management

- Reporting a skin problem can allow workplaces to keep a register of hand problems in a particular department or across the whole organisation. You may be asked to try alternative products.
- Report skin problems early, don't wait until your hands are in bad condition
- If your hands are sore, don't stop following hand hygiene, as you risk your own health and your patients' health with hospital acquired infection

Complete the Hand Hygiene Nursing/Midwifery Online Learning Module and implement advice
www.hha.org.au

Gloves

- Ensure they are suitable for the task
- Wear the correct size
- Avoid powdered latex gloves

Follow a good skin care routine

Hand washing

- Reduce hand washing where possible (unless hands visibly soiled) and use ABHR instead
- Use mild hand wash where possible
- Use warm water and not hot water for hand washing
- Dry hands thoroughly
- Ensure hands are dry before donning gloves
- Hand washing is the most common cause of hand dermatitis

Use alcohol based hand rubs (ABHR)

- Use ABHR where possible
- ABHR may sting hands if split and cracked. If it does sting, it does not mean you are allergic to it, it means your skin is damaged—start skin care immediately

Moisturise

- Moisturise hands regularly (start of the day, at meal breaks, after work and before bed)
- A cream is more effective than a lotion
- A fragrance free moisturiser is optimal

At home

- Use soap substitutes where possible
- Reduce the amount of wet work by using appropriate gloves
- Moisturise regularly

See GP or Staff Health Clinic

If the previous advice has not improved your hand dermatitis, you will need to see a doctor:

- You may need script for topical corticosteroid ointment or cream to apply to your hands
- You may need to have a blood test to determine if you are allergic to latex (RAST)
- You may need some time off to let your skin heal, or a rostering change

Complete the Hand Dermatitis Prevention Module
www.hha.org.au

See a dermatologist

- If there has still not been improvement, you may need a referral from your GP to see a dermatologist or attend Dermatology Outpatient Clinic
- You may be referred to a special clinic for patch testing.
- Patch testing is used to diagnose an allergy to something that your skin is coming into contact with.