

HAND DERMATITIS

PATIENT INSTRUCTION SHEET

What is Hand Dermatitis?

Hand Dermatitis (also called 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 persons have "tough" skin, but, unfortunately some persons have skin that's easily damaged. The result is dermatitis. Persons with Hand Dermatitis often have dermatitis elsewhere, and frequently blood relatives have Hand Dermatitis. We can't toughen your skin, but we have effective treatment to heal your dermatitis.

All persons with Hand Dermatitis need to follow the instructions of Section I - Hand Protection. Additionally, follow the instructions in Section IIA, IIB, or IIC, depending on your doctor's instructions.

Section I - Hand Protection

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 every day for a week to fix these instructions in your mind.

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 are better than rubber gloves, since some people become allergic to rubber (although for most people, rubber gloves are fine). Heavy-duty vinyl gloves are usually available at paint and hardware stores. Buy four or five pairs so they can be conveniently located in kitchen, bathroom, and laundry areas. If a glove develops a hole, discard it immediately!
2. The waterproof, heavy-duty vinyl gloves may be lined or unlined. You should have enough waterproof gloves so that the insides of the gloves can dry between wearings.
3. Wear waterproof gloves while peeling and squeezing lemons, oranges, or grapefruit, peeling potatoes, and handling tomatoes.
4. Lightweight, disposable vinyl (plastic) gloves may be used for activities for which heavy-duty vinyl gloves are too bulky. These are available in many drug stores or medical supply stores.
5. Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves when doing dry work and gardening. Dirty your gloves, not your hands.
6. 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.
7. Avoid direct contact with turpentine, paint thinner, paints, and floor, furniture, metal, and shoe polishes. They contain irritating solvents. When using them, wear heavy-duty waterproof gloves.
8. When washing your hands, use lukewarm water and a tiny amount of mild soap. Rinse the soap off carefully (all soaps are irritating to some degree) and dry gently.
9. Rings often worsen dermatitis by trapping irritating materials underneath. Remove your rings when doing housework and before washing your hands.
10. When outdoors in cold or windy weather, wear unlined leather gloves to protect your hands from drying and chapping.
11. Use only the prescribed medications and lubricants. Do not use other lotions, creams, or medications as they may irritate your skin.

12. 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're careful, the dermatitis may recur.

Section II. - Hand Treatment

Your doctor will check section A, B, or C, depending on your situation.

A. Lubricant only (usually involvement on back of hands).

1. Apply _____ (a moisturizing lubricant) to your hands many times a day. You should apply the lubricant after every hand washing, and as often as possible at other times; at least 10 times each day. Apply it very thinly to the rash and massage it in well. Apply the lubricant to your whole hand like a hand cream.
2. Do not apply any cream, lotion, or ointment to your hands except the one prescribed for you. One exception: If your skin is still too dry, you may apply plain white petroleum jelly (Vaseline) thinly after rubbing in your medicine.
3. Keep a container of the lubricant in every location where you wash your hands (kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, etc.) so you will always be certain to lubricate your hands after every time they get wet.
4. When washing your hands, use lukewarm water and a very small amount of mild soap. Rinse the soap off well and dry gently. Then apply a little lubricant and massage it in.
5. When your rash is much better, you may use the lubricant less often. However, you should apply it a least four times a day until your skin has healed completely.
6. Continue applying the lubricant until your skin is completely normal. Pamper your hands (Section 1 - Hand Protection) for at least four months after healing. It takes a long time for skin to recover from prolonged inflammation.
7. Hand Dermatitis is stubborn. If your hand rash improves at first and then worsens, it usually means you need to use your lubricant more often.
8. Hand Dermatitis often recurs. If your had rash comes back, resume following the Section 1 and 2A instructions.

B. Lubricant plus potent steroid (moderate involvement on back of hands or mild on palms).

1. In addition to all of the above recommendations in Sections I and IIA, especially the hand lubrication, apply the following steroid (cortisone type) medication _____ only to the involved areas _____ times per day until the skin is clear. Stop using the steroid medicine once the hands are clear!

C. Lubricant plus steroid under occlusion (usually significant involvement of palms)

1. In addition to all of the above recommendations in Sections I and IIA, apply the following steroid (cortisone type) medication _____ every night under plastic glove occlusion AS INSTRUCTED IN AN ACCOMPANYING INFORMATION SHEET.
2. Use the moisturizing lubricant at least fifteen times per day at first, including after every time your hands get wet.

Section III - Plastic Occlusion for Hand Dermatitis

This is to be used only if specifically instructed by your doctor and Section IIC was marked on the previous page.

1. The most important part of your treatment is to apply a concentrated steroid (cortisone-type) medicine to your rash at bedtime and then cover with lightweight disposable vinyl (plastic) gloves overnight. Wearing plastic gloves is essential to make the medicine penetrate the thick skin of the palms and fingers.
2. At bedtime, apply the following steroid medication _____ thinly to the rash areas only. Do not apply it to normal skin. Then put on the plastic gloves, taking them off in the morning. The plastic gloves recommended are disposable vinyl examining gloves. They can be re-used for a few days until they develop holes.
3. At first, wearing the plastic gloves may be a bit uncomfortable. This disappears after a few days.
4. If your fingertips are not involved, cut the fingertips off your gloves. If your rash is on only one or two fingers, you can cover them with plastic by using a finger cut from a plastic glove held in place with a non-irritating paper tape such as Micropore tape.
5. Be sure to follow these instructions exactly until your next appointment. The steroid plastic covering combined treatment would be used only under close medical supervision because it may cause excessive thinning of the skin if used for too long. As soon as your rash is better, we will provide directions for long term control of your Hand Dermatitis.