Introduction
Healthcare workers (and nurses in particular) are one of the groups reporting the highest incidence of work-related dermatitis (also known as eczema) due to frequent hand washing, exposure to irritant and allergenic chemicals, and frequent or persistent glove wearing.

What does Dermatitis feel like?
Someone who has dermatitis may experience symptoms of dryness, redness, itching and pain which can develop into flaking, scaling cracks, swelling and blisters the signs and symptoms of this condition can be so bad that the sufferer is unable to carry on at work.

Irritant contact dermatitis?
Can occur quickly after contact with a strong irritant, or over a longer period from repeated contact with weaker irritants.
May be chemical, biological, mechanical or physical e.g.
Soaps & detergents, Solvents, Food, Oils & greases, Dusts, Acids & alkalis.
Repeated and prolonged contact with water, known as Wet Work can also cause irritant dermatitis.

What causes allergic contact dermatitis?
Can occur when the sufferer develops an allergy to a substance. Once someone is ‘sensitised’, it is likely to be permanent and any skin contact with that substance will cause allergic contact dermatitis, often skin sensitizers are also irritants.
Some of the more common causes of allergic contact dermatitis include: Latex; Adhesives; Food; Cement; Hair dyes; Plants; UV cured printing inks.

Your Responsibilities
All employees have a duty of care to themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions. This includes taking care of their own skin and informing their line manager of any products or substances that they are known to have allergies to. You should also ensure that you are familiar with the relevant policies and procedures noted below.

Skin Health Surveillance
As part of the organisations duty to comply with health and safety legislation, NHS GGC has established a skin health surveillance programme. If you are deemed at risk of dermatitis, you will be asked to participate in the programme. Staff at risk include ‘wet workers’ and glove users. You will be asked by your manager to undertake an annual skin health surveillance questionnaire, and annual skin check. This process will be explained by your manager. This will ensure that if you do have any issues, we can make sure that you get the appropriate advice.

What to do if you suspect you have occupational Dermatitis
Alert your manager that you have a problem with your skin. Initially try to reduce your use of alcohol gel by using soap and water to wash hands. Pat dry your skin with white paper towels. Apply hospital moisturiser as often as possible and at least 5 times a shift and before any breaks. If skin problems develop with your hands see your GP for a diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible. Contact Occupational Health for a self-referral appointment to assess your hands and for advice on alternative products. http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/workin-g-with-us/hr-connect/occupational-health/
Local Managers should communicate these key safety messages to their staff at handovers, staff meetings, huddles etc. They are developed in response to events that have occurred or identified hazards.

Further Information or guidance is available at:
A list of products known to contain latex can be accessed at the Procurement Department Home Page on Staffnet (http://www.staffnet.ggc.scot.nhs.uk/Acute/Facilities/Procurement%20Department/Pages/default.aspx) under the tab ‘General Product Information’ then ‘Latex & Rubber Products’
The NHSGGC Infection Control Policy on Personal Protective Equipment can be accessed at the infection prevention and control web pages on HRConnect (http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/infection-prevention-and-control/)
Information on Latex & Dermatitis published by the Health & Safety Executive can be accessed at the HSE’s website (http://www.hse.gov.uk/)
Information on Contact Dermatitis can be found on the NHS.uk website (Link)
The Health Surveillance Policy which includes employee and management responsibilities and guidance can be accessed on our HR Connect pages at www.nhsggc.org.uk and searching for health surveillance (http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/working-with-us/hr-connect/health-safety/policies-guidance-documents-forms/health-surveillance/)
Learnpro modules are available, ‘GGC-Managing skin care for responsible persons’ and ‘GGC-Managing skin care at work for managers’