

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.

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 & Safety legislation, NHSGGC 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 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 do get the appropriate advice.

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What to do if you suspect you have occupational Dermatitis

Alert your manager that you have a problem with your skin.

Minimising the use of liquid soap and water and replacing it with alcohol based hand rub can help relieve symptoms.

Apply hospital moisturiser at least twice a day such as before lunch breaks. After work, more regular use is recommended.

If skin problems develop with your hands, report this to your manager – you will be referred to Occupational Health. You may be requested to attend your GP.

You can also contact Occupational Health for a self-referral appointment to assess your hands and for advice on alternative products.

<http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/working-with-us/hr-connect/occupational-health/>

Further Information or guidance is available at:

Information on incident reporting COSHH, personal protective equipment, policies and guidance including H&S Management Manual can be accessed at:

<http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/working-with-us/hr-connect/health-safety/>

A list of products known to contain latex can be accessed via StaffNet – Acute / Facilities / Procurement under the tab 'General Product Information' then 'Latex & Rubber Products'

Information on Latex & Dermatitis published by the Health & Safety Executive can be accessed at:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

The NHSGGC Infection Control Policy on Personal Protective Equipment can be accessed at:
<http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/infection-prevention-and-control/>

Information on Contact Dermatitis:
[http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/eczema-\(contact-dermatitis\)/pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/eczema-(contact-dermatitis)/pages/introduction.aspx)

The Health Surveillance Policy which includes employee and management responsibilities and guidance can be accessed at:

<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'. The Scottish IPC Education Pathway (Infection Control) within LearnPro also contains a module entitled 'Hand Hygiene'.