



Did you know? ...

Dermatitis

Work-related skin problems can cause suffering for individuals and even lead to ending your career. Skin problems caused by work are very common, especially in high risk jobs like construction. They are caused, or made worse, by being exposed or coming into contact with various substances, or chemical. In construction these can include:

- wet cement
- epoxy resins and hardeners
- acrylic sealants
- bitumen or asphalt
- solvents used in paints, glues or other surface coatings
- petrol, diesel, oils and greases
- degreasers, descalers and detergents



As well as coming into contact with substances having wet hands for long periods of time can also cause problems.

What are the hazards and risks with dermatitis?

Contact dermatitis is an inflammation of the skin caused by the skin coming in to contact with certain materials. It is most common on the hands but can affect all parts of the body.

There are 3 main types of contact dermatitis:

- **Irritant contact dermatitis** – which is caused by things that dry out and damage the skin
- **Allergic contact dermatitis** – this happens when someone becomes allergic to something that has



- come into contact with their skin, and can show hours or even days after contact
- **Contact urticaria** – this is a different type of allergy, occurring within minutes of touching certain things and disappears again within hours

What should my employer be doing?

You employer must make sure that your health is protected by identifying the hazards, assessing the risk and where possible avoiding contact or exposure to these substances or chemicals. If exposure, or contact, can not be avoided then your employer needs to carry out a risk assessment.

Once your employer has carried out a risk assessment then they must make sure that:

- Control measures are used, for example
 - Safe system of work are put in place and worked to
 - Correct PPE is available
- Provide washing facilities with running hot/warm and cold running water so that hands, forearms or any other exposed bits of skin, can be washed.
- Provide you with relevant information and training on skin problems and its risks to your health
- If necessary, carry out health surveillance



What health checks do I have?

Carrying out health checks, or surveillance, is important in detecting early signs of damage. For skin problems you can be given a questionnaire to fill in or asked some simple questions, then have a health check to look for any symptoms, for example redness, itching, scaling, swelling, blistering, flaking and cracking. If you have any symptoms of dermatitis then you would need to have further checks, or assessment.

What can I do to reduce the risk from dermatitis?

There are some simple steps to reduce the risk of dermatitis:



NATIONAL INDUSTRY SCHEME FOR WORKPLACE HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Helpline: **0845 873 7726**



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IMPROVING WORKPLACE HEALTH

- Avoid contact with materials that are known to cause dermatitis
- Protect your skin
 - Wash and dry your hands properly using the right soap/cleaner, that is the mildest one that will do the job
 - Use pre and after work creams
- Check skin for early signs of dermatitis



Don't let your skin come into contact with materials that cause dermatitis!

No contact = no dermatitis

If I spot any of these symptoms what do I need to do?

The signs of dermatitis are pretty much the same regardless of which type starting with:

- dry, red and itchy skin; then
- swelling, flaking, blistering, cracking and pain can follow



Being able to identify any signs of dermatitis at an early stage is important. As spotting this early and making some adjustments can prevent the condition from getting any worse.

If you recognise any of these symptoms then you need to speak to someone. Speak to your manager or the occupational health nurse or doctor, for general advice you can contact CBH on 0845 873 7726

Sometimes symptoms appear after only a few months of exposure or it may take a few years. But the symptoms are likely to get worse with continued exposure, and may become permanent so that you can never work with that substance, or chemical. Dermatitis can be painful and it can affect your ability to work.

Useful Links

HSE website -

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/skin/>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/healthtopics/dermatitis.htm>

CBH – www.cbhscheme.com

