

UHL DEPARTMENT OF DERMATOLOGY

PREVENTION OF HAND DERMATITIS AT HOME

Here are 4 important tips to prevent hand dermatitis and speed skin healing

1 Protect your hands with gloves

- If gloves are used for washing dishes and clothes they should be **plastic or PVC** and not rubber since rubber can cause dermatitis.
- Gloves should not be worn for more than 15 – 20 minutes at a time.
- If water enters a glove, take the glove off immediately.
- Wash gloves regularly: turn them inside out and rinse them under the hot water tap several times a week and then allow them to dry completely.
- **Cotton gloves** can be used under plastic ones to soak up sweat that would otherwise irritate your skin. They should only be worn a few times before they are washed.
- Buy several pairs of plastic and cotton gloves at a time for use in the kitchen and bathroom
- Beware of contaminating the **insides** of gloves with chemicals and soaps.
- If gloves become contaminated, rinse out immediately and leave to dry inside out.
- If gloves develop a hole discard immediately. Wearing a glove with a hole is worse than no gloves at all.
- Wear cotton gloves for housework. Wash them in the washing machine regularly
- Use heavy-duty fabric gloves when doing any gardening, DIY and outdoor work.
- Wear gloves when outdoors in cooler weather to prevent your hands drying, cracking and chapping

2 Use soap substitutes

- Normal soap and water can be irritating to the skin of your hands
- When washing your hands at home use lukewarm water and a soap substitute such as Dermol, Diprobase or Zerobase
- **Please note: this is not acceptable at work because COVID19 is not killed by emollient soap substitutes.**
- Soap substitutes are also excellent moisturisers and form a protective layer over the skin. Dry carefully with a clean towel, not forgetting to dry between the fingers.

- Have several tubs of these soap substitutes one next to each sink at home. Smaller tubes to carry around with you are also a good idea
- Use your soap substitute as a general moisturiser as well. They are safe to apply to all areas of the skin even in children. They should be used whenever your skin feels dry or itchy.

3 Avoid irritants

- Avoid direct contact with **detergents and other cleansing agents**. These are all irritants. Keep the outside of the packaging free of spillage to avoid your hands coming into direct contact with the detergents and cleansing agents.
- Skin cleansers and wipes can also be harsh on the hands and are best avoided. Use a soap substitute instead
- For washing up use running water if possible.
- Never wash your hands with soap when wearing a ring because the soap can get trapped under the ring and cause irritation of the skin.
- Similarly, rings should not be worn during housework or other wet work, even if you've had dermatitis which has healed. Rings should be cleaned on the inside frequently with a brush then rinsed thoroughly.
- Washing machines and dishwashers are the ideal way of protecting your hands from irritants.
- Avoid direct contact with polishes including **metal, wax, shoe, floor, car, furniture and window polishes**.
- Avoid direct contact with **solvents and stain-removers** such as white spirit, petrol, trichloroethylene, turpentine and thinners.
- Do not peel or squeeze onions, **garlic, chillies, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, potatoes or tomatoes** with bare hands because they are irritants. You can eat these foods without any problem
- Do not apply **hair lotion, hair cream or hair dye** with bare hands.
- Ask another family member to do these chores for you

4 Keep going

- **It takes time for your skin to develop -and recover from- dermatitis.**
- **Don't forget that the skin will remain vulnerable for at least 6 months after the dermatitis appears to be completely healed so continue to follow the above instructions.**