

## **HAND CARE ADVICE AND INFORMATION SHEET FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS**

Hand dermatitis is a common condition affecting up to 10% of the population. Some occupations, including working in health care, make us more vulnerable to dermatitis. The most common causes are working with wet hands and contact with liquid soaps & cleaning materials.

Good hand care and simple precautions can reduce your risk of developing a work related skin problem:

1. Use liquid soap and water only when hands are visibly soiled or dirty or caring for a patient/client with a suspected or known gastro-intestinal infection.
2. Use alcohol based hand rub for routine hand cleansing in all other clinical situations.
3. The WHO and NHS Scotland advise that alcohol based hand rubs are more gentle on the skin than soap and water because they do not strip away the natural oils/lipid layer. If you have skin that is already damaged by wet work, alcohol based hand rubs will sting, but continued use over a couple of days can allow the natural oils to replenish themselves
4. When wet washing of the hands is required please ensure to:
  - Always wet hands prior to applying liquid soap.
  - Rinse your hands thoroughly to ensure removal of all traces of product.
  - Thoroughly dry your hands by patting dry, don't rub.
5. Use a non-perfumed, water-based 'emollient' moisturiser (these should be readily available within the workplace). These creams help to reduce dryness and make the skin less susceptible to irritation.
6. Try to use a moisturiser/emollient at least twice a day and more often if you suffer from dry skin or dermatitis. Also remember to moisturise regularly at home.
7. Do not use communal tubs of hand cream in a health care setting as this is an infection control risk.
8. Don't wear Jewellery. If you must wear a plain wedding band, ensure to thoroughly rinse and dry beneath it to prevent a build up of skin irritants.
9. Only wear gloves where necessary and in line with infection control policy and local risk assessment.
  - Avoid latex and powdered gloves.
  - Ensure skin is dry before donning gloves.
  - Wear the correct size of glove.
  - Avoid wearing gloves for prolonged periods of time.
10. Remember to take care of your skin outside of work for example when gardening, household chores or hobbies.

**Dermatitis is easier to treat if recognised early. If you find your skin on your hands, wrists or forearms gets worse and you experience cracking or bleeding please inform your manager straight away and contact the Occupational Health Department for advice as soon as possible on 0141 201 0594.**