

Are your hands dry, red, itchy, sore or sting when following hand hygiene? Do you have contact dermatitis?

Practical steps for healthcare workers with contact dermatitis

Report skin problem to management

- Reporting a skin problem can allow workplaces to keep a register of hand problems in a particular department or across the whole organisation. You may be asked to try alternative products.
- Report skin problems early, don't wait until your hands are in bad condition
- If your hands are sore, don't stop following hand hygiene, as you risk your own health and your patients' health with hospital acquired infection

Follow a good skin care routine

Reduce hand washing

- Hand washing is the most common cause of hand dermatitis
- Reduce hand washing where possible (unless hands visibly soiled) and use ABHR instead
- Use mild hand wash where possible
- Use warm water and not hot water for hand washing
- Dry hands thoroughly

Use alcohol based hand rubs (ABHR)

- Use ABHR where possible
- ABHR may sting hands if split and cracked. If it does sting, it does not mean you are allergic to it, it means your skin is damaged

Moisturise

- Moisturise regularly
- Especially at the start of the day, at meal breaks, after work and before bed.
- A cream in a tub or tube is more effective than a lotion in a pump pack.

At home

- Use soap substitutes where possible
- Reduce the amount of wet work by using appropriate gloves
- Moisturise regularly

See GP or Staff Health Clinic

If the previous advice has not improved your hand dermatitis, you will need to see a doctor:

- You may need script for topical corticosteroid ointment or cream to apply to your hands
- You may need to have a blood test to determine if you are allergic to latex (RAST)
- You may need some time off to let your skin heal, or a rostering change

See a dermatologist

- If there has still not been improvement, you may need a referral from your GP to see a dermatologist or attend Dermatology Outpatient Clinic
- You may be referred to a special clinic for patch testing.
- Patch testing is used to diagnose an allergy to something that your skin is coming into contact with.