

WORK WITH CHEMICALS? STAY SAFE

Avoid skin conditions such as DERMATITIS

Information for *employers* and *employees*



Many people live with pain and discomfort because of work-related dermatitis. The condition also results in millions of pounds in the UK being paid out to victims in compensation.

By taking a sensible, positive approach to looking after health and safety, you could prevent work-related dermatitis and the associated problems in your workplace.

Hands are most at risk but other parts of the body can be affected.



What causes dermatitis?

Work-related dermatitis can be caused by exposure to chemical agents and wet work (it means having hands repeatedly wet for long periods during the working day).

Other agents causing work-related dermatitis can be biological (for example plants and/or bacteria), physical (for example vibration and/or radiation) and mechanical (for example abrasion).



What are the legal obligations?

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health [COSHH] Regulations require employers to identify the hazards associated with substances in the workplace, such as chemical agents, and prevent or adequately control those risks.

Other regulations are relevant to people who come in to contact with chemicals at work, including the management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations.

How to recognise hazardous substances

- Suppliers are required by law to identify the hazards of the chemicals and products they provide via labelling of packs and provision of a Safety Data Sheet to professional users.
- Before using a chemical, always read the label on the container and consult the safety data sheet.
- Consumer products, such as those used for hairdressing, are unlikely to carry warning signs but may still be hazardous. If in doubt, contact your supplier.



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For more information:

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Call: 0800 0320 121

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Conduct a Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is an essential first step for all sectors.



Safe Working Distance (SWD)

In many instances, when hands are being used as tools, they are frequently immersed in chemicals and/or water. Try to reduce dermal exposure in the workplace by maintaining a SWD.



Protect the skin

In situations where adequate control of skin exposure cannot be achieved by other methods, provide suitable protection (for example PPE and/or skin care products).



Avoid skin contact

Try to eliminate the use of a hazardous substance or wet working (for example by using an alternative process). Use less harmful substances (for example substitution) or modify the process to prevent/minimise the contact with hands.

Safe Skin Management in different sectors

SECTOR	SKIN CARE CONSIDERATIONS
Office Areas	Ensure soap and hot and cold running water is available in washrooms
Industrial Manufacturing, including automotive and heavy engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use PPE to minimise contact with contaminants and chemicals. However, avoid prolonged wearing of impervious gloves • Pre-work cream makes hands easier to clean after work and may help protect the skin • Select the mildest hand cleanser possible and choose product according to the type of contaminants in your workplace • Use a moisturising after-work cream at the end of each work period • Use sealed cartridge hand cleanser dispensers or pump packs wherever possible to avoid the risk of cross contamination
Outdoor Workers, including construction/building trades and mobile workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use PPE (for example gloves) to minimise contact with contaminants and chemicals. Pay particular attention when working with materials such as irritant chemicals or cement, which can cause severe burns as a result of direct contact or as a result of insufficient PPE protection. Do not wear impervious gloves continuously as this may exacerbate skin problems • Pre-work cream makes hands easier to clean after work and may help protect the skin • Ensure that when outside workers are aware of the risks of exposure to the sun and use sunscreen on any exposed areas • Select the mildest hand cleanser possible and choose product according to the type of contaminants in your workplace • For workers with restricted access to hand washing facilities, provide a hand cleanser or wipes designed for use without water • Use a moisturising after-work cream at the end of each work period to restore the moisture content of the skin
Food Manufacture & Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use gloves where required, but avoid using these continuously for long periods • Minimise the number of times hands are washed in water, consistent with food hygiene requirements. • Use a non-tainting, anti-bacterial hand cleanser • Provide after-work creams for use at the end of each work period to restore the moisture content of the skin
Personal Care Sector, including cleaning, hairdressing and other jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use gloves where appropriate, for example when washing hair or handling chemicals, but avoid overuse • Provide a good quality, mild hand soap in dispensers to reduce the risks posed by wet working • Rinse hands and dry thoroughly • Provide after-work creams for use at the end of each work period to restore the moisture content of the skin