



Adult, Pediatric & Cosmetic Dermatology  
Laser & Skin Surgery

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## Hand Dermatitis (Hand Eczema)

Hand dermatitis is very common. Hand rashes usually result from a combination of sensitive skin and irritation or allergy from materials touched. Everyone's hands routinely touch irritating soaps and detergents several times a day. Add the raw foods, solvents, paints, oils, greases, acids, glues, and so on, that most of us touch at work or in the home, and you can see that the skin of your hands takes a beating.

Not everyone gets hand dermatitis. Many lucky people have tough skin, but, unfortunately, some people have skin that's easily damaged. The result is dermatitis. People with hand dermatitis often have dermatitis elsewhere, and frequently blood relatives have hand dermatitis. We can't toughen your skin, but we have effective treatment to heal your dermatitis. Skin protection is an important part of your treatment. This instruction sheet gives you detailed directions on how to protect your hands.

1. Protect your hands from direct contact with soaps, detergents, scouring powders, and similar irritating chemicals by wearing waterproof, heavy-duty vinyl gloves. Heavy-duty vinyl gloves are better than rubber gloves, since you may become allergic to rubber. Heavy-duty vinyl gloves are usually available at paint and hardware stores. Buy four or five pairs so they can be conveniently located in the kitchen, bathroom, and laundry areas. If a glove develops a hole, discard it immediately! Wearing a glove with a hole is worse than wearing no gloves at all.
2. The waterproof, heavy-duty vinyl gloves may be lined or unlined. You should have enough waterproof gloves so that the insides of the gloves can dry between use. Use light re-usable cotton gloves under the vinyl gloves to absorb excess sweat and moisture.
3. Wear waterproof gloves while peeling and squeezing lemons, oranges, or grapefruit, peeling potatoes, and handling tomatoes.
4. Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves when doing housework and gardening. Dirty your gloves- not your hands. If you keep house for your family, scatter a dozen pairs of cheap cotton gloves about your home and use them while doing dry housework. When they get dirty put them in the washing machine. Wash your gloves, not your hands.
5. If you have an automatic dishwasher, use it as much as possible. If you don't let a member of your family do the dishes. do the dishes by machine, not by hand.
6. Avoid direct contact with turpentine, paint thinner, paints, metal and shoe polishes. They contain irritating solvents. When using them, wear heavy-duty waterproof gloves.
7. When washing your hands, use cool or lukewarm and very little mild soap. Rinse the soap off carefully and dry gently. All soaps are irritating. No soap is gentle to your skin except in the minds of advertising writers- so don't waste your money on special soaps or 'soap free' cleansers. Decrease frequency of hand washing.
8. Rings often worsen dermatitis by trapping irritating materials beneath them. Remove your rings when doing housework and before washing your hands.
9. When outdoors in cold or windy weather, wear unlined leather gloves to protect your hands from drying and chapping.
10. Use only the prescribed medicines and moisturizers. Do not use other lotions, creams, or medications- they may irritate your skin.

## Medication Instructions

1. The most important part of your treatment is to apply a concentrated cortisone medicine to your rash two times daily– in the morning and at night. On occasion, depending on your condition and the type of cortisone used, plastic gloves will be recommended to occlude the medicine overnight. This will amplify the effectiveness of the medicine.
2. At bedtime, after first moistening the skin with cool water, apply \_\_\_\_\_ (a cortisone) thinly to the rash areas only; do **not** apply to normal skin. Then put on plastic gloves, taking them off in the morning. The plastic gloves recommended are disposable vinyl or latex examining gloves and they can be re-used for a few days until they develop holes. They are made in four sizes.
3. At first wearing the plastic gloves may be a bit uncomfortable. This disappears after a few days. If you prefer, light reusable cotton gloves may be used instead.
4. The cortisone ointment- plastic glove treatment can cause skin thinning and should be used exactly as directed on this sheet. it is important to apply the cortisone medicine only to the rash when covering with plastic gloves. Do not apply the cortisone medicine to normal skin.
5. During the day, apply the prescribed hand moisturizing creams thinly to the entire skin of both hands. The daytime moisturizer can be used as often as desired, and should be used after each hand washing. Apply the moisturizer at least 10 times a day! If the daytime hand moisturizer is not greasy enough, you may apply white petrolatum (Vaseline) very thinly after applying the daytime hand cream. **Do not use any creams, lotions or ointments except as instructed.**
6. Pamper your hands by following the hand protection instructions.
7. When washing your hands, use lukewarm water and very little mild soap. Rinse the soap off well and dry gently. Then apply hand moisturizer and massage in well.
8. Be sure to follow these instructions exactly until your next appointment. The strong cortisone - plastic covering combined treatment should be used only under close medical supervision. As soon as your rash is better, we will provide directions for long term control of your hand dermatitis.
9. If your dermatitis is resistant to treatment, patch testing may be advised to try to ascertain an allergic trigger of your dermatitis.

## Hand Care Maintenance

1. When your hand dermatitis is better, the overnight plastic treatment will be used less. It is important to gradually decrease the treatment and not discontinue it abruptly.
2. When your skin has nearly healed, start using the cortisone medicine and plastic covering every other night. If your hand dermatitis improves as expected, you should start this in 10 days to 2 weeks. On the nights you don't use the cortisone use \_\_\_\_\_ with or without glove occlusion at bedtime.
3. If you do well wearing gloves only every other night, after about two weeks, wear them only every third night. If your hands remain clear while using the plastic covering every third night, after three to four weeks you may try stopping the cortisone medicine and plastic glove treatment.
4. These directions are rough guides; the exact timing depends on the condition of your skin. If your rash gets worse when you switch to plastic every other night; return to every night treatment. Later when the rash gets better again, try starting the every other night plastic covering.
5. While you are gradually using less and less of the night time plastic glove treatment, keep using frequent applications of the daytime hand moisturizer. It is important that you continue to protect your hands carefully as described in the hand protection instructions.
6. Some patients find that as soon as they completely stop wearing plastic gloves, the hand rash returns. If this happens, use the cortisone medicine - overnight glove treatment one or two times a week as needed to keep the rash under control.
7. **Important Caution.** Strong cortisones covered with plastic may cause skin thinning which results in skin shearing and cracking easily. To prevent skin thinning, be sure to use the strong cortisone- plastic glove treatment less often as soon as the rash is better.
8. When your hand rash has cleared, see if regular use of the medicated hand moisturizer and careful hand protection will keep your skin free of rash. Continue the hand moisturizer and the hand protection routines for at least 4 months after healing. It takes a long time for the skin to recover.
9. The cortisone medicines keep for at least a year at room temperature. As long as the original prescriptions are refillable, if you need more medicine, take the original container to your pharmacist for your refill. If you have used up all the authorized refills, please make an appointment for a check-up visit.
10. Patients with hand dermatitis often have recurrences. Should your hand dermatitis recur, begin with every night plastic covering until you are better, and then use it less and less. If your rash does not get better after one week of every night treatment stop it and return to this office so your treatment can be changed.