

# HAND PROTECTION FOR HAND ECZEMA

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**Hand eczema** (hand dermatitis) is 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.

Skin protection is an important part of treatment. This instruction sheet gives you detailed directions on how to protect your hands.

1. Minimize hand washing, and avoid putting hands in water when possible. All soaps can be irritating. When washing your hands use lukewarm water and no soap. If you need soap use a small amount of a mild soap. Examples:  
Dove Unscented, Cetaphil Cleansing Lotion, Aquanil Lotion
2. Apply a bland moisturizer each time you wash your hands and as needed for dryness. You should have bottles of hand cream by every sink in the house, car, desk, purse, etc.  
Examples: Aquaphor Healing Ointment, Petrolatum (ointment), Eucerin Original Formula Crème, Cetaphil Cream, Neutrogena Norwegian Formula Hand Cream.  
Avoid moisturizers with fragrance, as they are often irritating.
3. Protect your hands from direct contact with soaps, detergents, wet diapers, certain foods such as citrus products and other irritating chemicals by wearing waterproof, heavy-duty vinyl gloves. Heavy-duty vinyl gloves are better than rubber since you may become allergic to rubber. They

should be kept in the kitchen, bathroom, and laundry areas.

4. We strongly suggest wearing cotton lined gloves inside rubber gloves as they will absorb any sweat and keep your hands drier.
5. Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves when doing dry work and gardening. When they get dirty, put them in the washing machine. Wash your gloves and not your hands.
6. If you have an automatic dishwasher, use it as much as possible, otherwise let a family member do the dishes. Do your laundry by machine, not by hand.
7. Avoid direct contact with turpentine, paint thinner, paints, and floor, furniture, and metal polishes. They contain irritating solvents. When using them, wear heavy-duty waterproof gloves.
8. Rings worsen eczema 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.
10. Hand eczema is often a long-term problem that may flare up with exposure to irritants and with emotional stress. There is no fast, magic cure. Your skin must be given a rest from irritation.
11. The prescription medicines should be applied 2-3 times a day. Use moisturizers in between medicine applications.

The prescription medicines are topical steroids. These can thin normal skin when used for extended periods of time. Use them two to three times a day until your skin clears. Once your skin is clear (it may take 2-3 months), stop using the prescription creams and continue the good skin care discussed on this sheet.

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