Looking after your hands
Good skin care is important especially for healthcare workers. Your job may require frequent hand washing and wearing of gloves. As a result, your skin's natural barrier can be damaged and become inflamed. This leaflet is for those who suffer with eczema or dermatitis and provides advice to help the skin recover.

Hand washing steps
You should use lukewarm water and a soap substitute for example; E45 wash, aqueous cream, emulsifying ointment or hydrous ointment. If your hands are dirty use an unscented soap without tar or sulphur. The soap should be used sparingly and the hands rinsed thoroughly. Use a clean towel to dry carefully, especially in the web spaces between your fingers. If soap is used then this should be followed with an unscented moisturiser.

Moisturising
If your skin is dry use an unscented moisturiser as frequently as possible to restore a feeling of suppleness. As your skin improves the frequency of applying moisturiser can be reduced.

Gloves
You should always choose your gloves according to the task in hand;
At work: Where ever possible you should use nitrile gloves, in exceptional circumstances latex gloves may be used.
At home: Cotton linings in domestic gloves will reduce friction further. If possible, gloves should not be worn for more than 20 minutes at a time. If water happens to enter a glove then it should be removed immediately.

Gloves should be turned inside out and rinsed under warm water several times a week. Gloves used for home and domestic purposes should be replaced every 2–3 weeks for home use, and more frequently for industrial use. You should inspect your gloves regularly.

Further advice on gloves should be sought from the Occupational Health Department.

Detergents
Avoid contact with detergents and other strong cleansing agents. Do not use your bare hands to touch packages which are contaminated on the outside.

Shampoo
You should avoid direct contact with shampoo. Use plastic gloves when washing the hair of your children or animals.

Polishes
You should avoid contact with any polishes or wax for example; metal, shoe, floor, furniture, window.

Solvents
Solvents will degrease your skin so you should avoid contact with white spirits, petrol, paraffin, turpentine, thinners, paint strippers and trichlorethylene (“Trike”).

Citrus fruits
The juice of citrus fruit can cause irritation to some individuals' hands, these include oranges, satsuma's, lemons, limes, and grapefruit.
Cosmetics
Do not apply hair lotion, hair cream, perming lotion or hair dye with your bare hands. Hair removing creams will damage your skin; avoid using these creams or wear gloves if you do need to use these products.

Cold temperatures
You should wear warm gloves in cold weather or cold conditions.

Jewellery
Wearing rings on your fingers traps soap and other substances next to the skin. Do not wear rings at work or for doing housework until the skin has been clear for at least three months. Never wash your hands using soap whilst wearing a ring. Keep the insides of your rings clean by brushing them under running water.

Dish washing
Keep the temperature of the water low and use running water. You should use long handled brushes rather than cloths. Always wear gloves when in contact with detergents and washing up liquid.

Machines
Use of washing machines and dishwashers will prevent further flaring of the skin and inflammation. If loose powder is used then this should be handled with a measuring cup. Pre-packed tablets or capsules will reduce the contact with the detergent.

Remember that skin resistance is lowered for at least 4 to 5 months after the dermatitis has apparently healed.
You should continue with these skin care instructions during this time.

Feedback
We are keen to hear your comments and ideas about improving the service. Please email the department with any comments;
OccupationalHealth.Enquiries@uhb.nhs.uk

If you have any concerns or feedback please telephone or email the Deputy Head or Head of Service as below:

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How to refer
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