



## SAFETY TOOLBOX TRAINING – CONTACT DERMATITIS

### SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:

- Use toolbox trainings to spark safety discussions during monthly meetings with employees
- Submit the employee sign-in sheet to your designated administrative assistant /training coordinator as a record of training



Contact dermatitis is a localized rash or irritation of the skin caused by contact with an irritating or allergy-causing substance. This type of dermatitis is the most frequent cause of occupational skin disease; irritating or allergy-causing substances that cause contact dermatitis in many people include poisonous plants such as poison ivy and sumac, cleaning solutions, detergents, industrial chemicals, latex rubber gloves, and cosmetics. Contact dermatitis most often occurs on the hands, wrists, and forearms, although any area may be affected. Dusts, vapors, and mists can spread the irritants and expose other areas such as the eyelids, face, ears, and neck. Symptoms include itching, inflammation, swelling, burning, skin lesions, rashes, blisters, cracking, and peeling of the skin. The skin may also become raw, scaly, and thickened. These symptoms appear on the area of skin exposed and generally take anywhere from several days to weeks to heal. The reaction may vary from slight to severe, and the dermatitis fades only if the skin no longer comes into contact with the allergen or irritant.

### There are two types of contact dermatitis: Allergic and Irritant.

**Allergic Contact Dermatitis** is inflammation caused by exposure to a substance to which the person has become hypersensitive or allergic. The reaction may vary depending on the irritant, body part, and sensitivity of the individual. Exposure may cause immediate reaction, or the allergy may develop over time. Common plant allergens are poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. Many other substances can cause allergic reactions such as soaps, latex gloves, jewelry, lotions, perfumes, cosmetics, and medications.



**Irritant Contact Dermatitis** is the most common type of contact dermatitis. It is inflammation resulting from direct contact with a substance that is caustic or corrosive to the skin. The reaction generally resembles a burn. The longer the substance remains on the skin, the more severe the reaction. Household cleaners, detergents, industrial cleaning products, drain clog removers, and solvents can also cause irritant contact dermatitis.



### Prevention



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- If you know what caused the dermatitis, avoid the substance. If you cannot avoid the substance altogether, take steps to protect your skin from the substance.
- Wear the proper protective equipment required for the job such as: long sleeves and pants, and/or gloves.
- Substitute chemicals that are less irritating or allergenic where possible.
- Inform workers about the substances they work with and their potential hazards.
- Apply barrier cream or lotions before wearing gloves.
- Dry hands thoroughly after washing.
- Don't use abrasive pads to scrub hands.

### Treatment

- Wash the area with soap and cool water immediately after exposure.
- Workers should immediately report all skin discomforts or disorders to their supervisor, Employee Health Services, and EHSO.
- In many instances, contact dermatitis can be treated through the use of calamine lotion, hydrocortisone cream, cold compresses, ointments, and antihistamines such as Benadryl.
- If your symptoms do not respond to such nonprescription treatment, a trained medical professional might prescribe prescription strength antihistamines or corticosteroid creams.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. True or False. Contact dermatitis occurs mostly in occupational settings.

**Answer:** True

2. Which of the following are symptoms of contact dermatitis?
  - a. itching
  - b. rashes
  - c. peeling of the skin
  - d. All of the above

**Answer:** D – All of the above

3. Where should you go if you experience contact dermatitis?
  - a. Employee Health Services
  - b. McDonalds
  - c. Woodruff P. E. Center
  - d. Michael C. Carlos Museum

**Answer:** A – Employee Health Services