

Skin Rash (Contact Dermatitis)

DEFINITION

Contact dermatitis is a skin rash that can occur anywhere on the body, caused by contact with an irritating substance. It cannot be spread to another area on the body or to other persons.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Itching
- Skin redness
- Cracks in the skin
- Areas of the skin are weeping and oozing fluid.

CAUSES

- Some metals in jewelry
- Poison ivy
- Certain topical medications
- Chemicals in some cosmetics
- Latex gloves.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid contact with any irritant which has caused the rash
- Wearing protective gloves
- Protect skin from sunburn and other burns.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Symptoms can be controlled with treatment and avoidance of the irritant. Recurrence is common, so be aware.

TREATMENT

- Avoid the chemical or material causing the skin eruption
- Use bath oil or mild soap instead of deodorant soap
- Pat skin dry rather than rubbing it
- Reduce water temperature to lukewarm for bathing or other uses
- Try products such as calamine lotions and cortisone creams. Use as the package directs. If there is no improvement, contact your physician.
- Minimize the use of harsh chemicals and detergents. Wear heavy-duty, cotton lined vinyl gloves to prevent contact with irritating substances such as: hot water, soap, detergent, metal scouring pads, scouring powder, paint, paint thinner, turpentine and polish for cars, floors, shoes, furniture or metal.
- Dry the insides of gloves after each use. Discard gloves if they develop a hole. Wash gloves after use.
- Wear gloves when you peel or squeeze lemons, oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes or potatoes.

- Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves for housework or gardening.
- Use a dishwasher (if available) to wash dishes or ask someone else to do it.
- Remove rings before doing housework or washing hands.

MEDICATIONS

Creams, ointments or lotions may be recommended for topical application. These may include steroid preparations to reduce inflammation or lubricants to preserve moisture.

NOTIFY YOUR PHYSICIAN IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING OCCUR:

- Fever
- Signs of infection (swelling, tenderness, redness, warmth) develop at the site of irritation
- Treatment does not relieve symptoms in one week.