



Northern Arizona Dermatology Center

SKIN CARE OF HANDS

Hand rashes and irritation are very common. In addition to prescription medication that your physician may prescribe, proper skin care can aid in healing.

1. There are many substances that may be irritating, and you should avoid these as much as possible. Frequent washing of hands with soap and water is one of the most common ways that patients irritate their hands. Other irritants include raw vegetables, meat, fruit juices, household chemicals, cleansers, and polishes.
2. When washing hands, use lukewarm water and a small amount of mild soap. Avoid soaps with fragrances, disinfectants, and deodorants. Mild soaps include Aveeno fragrance-free bar soap, Cetaphil gentle liquid cleanser, and others that are sold over the counter. After washing, always pat dry hands instead of rubbing. Try to avoid rough paper towels.
3. Remove jewelry when washing hands as these can trap irritating soap and water.
4. Constant washing of the hands or working in wet conditions can make any type of hand eczema worse. If you must work in wet conditions, it is best to “double glove”. Use a pair of 100% cotton white gloves, which can be purchased in many drugstores, to wear over your hands. Over these, you may use loose rubber or vinyl gloves. The thick gloves will protect your hands from the water, while the cotton gloves will protect your hands from the irritation and sweating that can be caused by the rubber gloves. Wear these gloves when washing dishes, working with household chemicals, peeling vegetables, or other similar situations.
5. Moisturize your hands frequently during the day. You should always carry moisturizer with you and apply it to your hands each and every time you wash your hands. Ointments are the greasiest. They are the best for hands that are severely affected but may be difficult to use during the day when working. They can still be used at night, however. Vaseline petroleum jelly (make sure to buy the one without fragrance) in one example. Creams are less greasy. Examples include Cerave cream, Neutrogena Norwegian hand cream, Aveeno Eczema Therapy cream, and Vanicream cream. Lotions are the least moisturizing. Look for moisturizers that are fragrance-free.
6. In cold water, protect your hands from the temperature and wind with gloves.
7. If prescribed a topical steroid ointment by your physician for the treatment of hand eczema, use it only on the affected areas in a thin layer. The medication should be applied first and is usually prescribed for use twice daily. Next you should apply a moisturizing hand cream or ointment to the entire area of the hands. When your rash improves, you should stop using the prescription ointment. You should, however, continue using the moisturizing hand creams and continue following the other recommendations, since many people with hand eczema are prone to repeat rashes.