

## Hand and nail Care

Hand dermatitis (eczema) is very common, and a few simple steps can really help.

### Avoid soaps and detergents

Anything that bubbles can strip the protective oils from your hands, causing them to become dry and reducing the barrier function of the skin. Instead of soap, you can use any moisturiser, such as diprobase cream, zeroaqs or E45 lotion, or a special product such as QV gentle wash.

Avoid having wet hands for prolonged periods of time. For wet work you should always wear gloves.

Make sure you rinse your hands properly after washing, paying extra attention to the areas between the fingers, and underneath any rings, jewellery or watches. Then make sure your hands are properly dry, to avoid small amounts of dampness staying between the fingers for prolonged periods of time.

When doing washing up, or other jobs with cleaning fluids, always wear protective gloves. You may find the cotton-lined rubber gloves more comfortable than normal rubber gloves. You can even try washing your hair with gloves on!

### Moisturise often

It is very important to keep your hands well moisturised. Moisturise every time you wash your hands, and several times during the day. Keeping a small tube of moisturiser in your bag is a good idea. A greasier moisturiser at night can be very helpful too. A thick application of Vaseline under cotton gloves overnight is a bit messy but leaves your hands lovely and soft in the morning!

### Avoid dirt

Wear gloves for dirty work, as well as for any work involving solvents. If you do get dirt under your fingernails, clean them with a soft-bristled nail brush. Avoid the temptation to dig the dirt out from under the nails with anything else!

### Nail care

Keep nails short. If they tend to come away at the ends, then it is best to file them down as short as you can, to avoid having any bit of nail that can catch on things and pull away further. The cuticle provides an important barrier for the nail – **do not be tempted to cut away, or push back, the cuticle**, as this greatly increases the risk of infections around the nails.

Some people are allergic to nail varnish, and to the glue that attaches false nails. This commonly causes eyelid eczema (from touching your face) rather than eczema around the nails themselves.

If you have pits in the nails, you can fill them in with special nail products, or with gel-type superglue from any hardware store. Be careful not to glue them to anything else! Once the glue has set, it can then be filed flat, and varnish applied over the top if you like. If you develop facial eczema you may be allergic to the glue and will have to stop using it.