Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust

Prevention of hand dermatitis at home

Here are 4 important tips to prevent hand dermatitis and to speed skin healing if you are affected:

1. Protect your hands with gloves

- If gloves are used for washing dishes and clothes they should be **plastic or PVC** and not rubber since rubber can cause dermatitis.
- Gloves should not be worn for more than 15 – 20 minutes at a time.
- If water enters a glove, take the glove off immediately.
- Wash gloves regularly: turn them inside out and rinse them under the hot water tap several times a week and then allow them to dry completely.
- **Cotton gloves** can be used under plastic ones to soak up sweat that would otherwise irritate your skin. They should only be worn a few times before they are washed.
- Buy several pairs of plastic and cotton gloves at a time for use in the kitchen and bathroom
- Beware of contaminating the **insides** of gloves with chemicals and soaps.
- If gloves become contaminated, rinse out immediately and leave to dry inside out.
- If gloves develop a hole discard immediately. Wearing a glove with a hole is worse than no gloves at all.
- Wear cotton gloves for housework. Wash them in the washing machine regularly
- Use heavy-duty fabric gloves when doing any gardening, DIY and outdoor work.
- Wear gloves when outdoors in cooler weather to prevent your hands drying, cracking and chapping

2. Use soap substitutes

- Normal soap and water can be irritating to the skin of your hands
- When washing your hands at home use lukewarm water and a soap substitute such as Dermol lotion, Diprobase cream or Zerobase cream

- **Please note: this is not acceptable at work because Covid-19 is not killed by emollient soap substitutes.**
- Soap substitutes are also excellent moisturisers and form a protective layer over the skin. Dry carefully with a clean towel, not forgetting to dry between the fingers.
- Have several tubs of these soap substitutes one next to each sink at home. Smaller tubes to carry around with you are also a good idea
- Use your cream as a general moisturiser as well. They are safe to apply to all areas of the skin even in children. They should be used whenever your skin feels dry or itchy.

3. Avoid irritants

- Avoid direct contact with **detergents and other cleansing agents**. These are all irritants. Keep the outside of the packaging free of spillage to avoid your hands coming into direct contact with the detergents and cleansing agents.
- Skin cleansers and wipes can also be harsh on the hands and are best avoided. Use a soap substitute instead
- For washing up use running water if possible.
- Never wash your hands with soap when wearing a ring because the soap can get trapped under the ring and cause irritation of the skin.
- Similarly, rings should not be worn during housework or other wet work, even if you've had dermatitis which has healed. Rings should be cleaned on the inside frequently with a brush then rinsed thoroughly.
- Washing machines and dishwashers are the ideal way of protecting your hands from irritants.
- Avoid direct contact with polishes including **metal, wax, shoe, floor, car, furniture and window polishes**.
- Avoid direct contact with **solvents and stain-removers** such as white spirit, petrol, trichloroethylene, turpentine and thinners.
- Do not peel or squeeze onions, **garlic, chillies, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, potatoes or tomatoes** with bare hands because they are irritants. You can eat these foods without any problem
- Do not apply **hair lotion, hair cream or hair dye** with bare hands.
- Ask another family member to do these chores for you

4. Keep going

- It takes time for your skin to develop -and recover from- dermatitis.
- Don't forget that the skin will remain vulnerable for at least 6 months after the dermatitis appears to be completely healed so continue to follow the above instructions.