

# Contact Dermatitis



Contact dermatitis occurs in response to irritants and allergens affecting the skin. It is most commonly caused by irritants such as soaps and detergents, solvents or regular contact with water.

Allergic contact dermatitis is less common and can be triggered by an allergic reaction to substances found in certain products, such as cosmetics, or some metals, including nickel.

## Symptoms include:

- Dry, itchy, blistered and cracked skin
- Redness or darkening of the skin

## Red flag symptoms

- Signs of skin infection
- Severe redness and swelling of the skin
- Pain or tenderness in the affected area
- Fever or flu-like symptoms
- Difficulty breathing

## Self-care advice

- Rinse with water or washing with soap as soon as possible after contact
- Replace products containing strong irritants with weaker ones
- Reduce the duration and frequency of contact with the irritant
- Use gloves and other forms of protective clothing
- Short term use of topical steroids to control the symptoms
- If possible avoid the allergen
- Use emollients and soap substitutes to maintain hydration and improve skin barrier

## Onward referrals

- If large areas of the body are affected
- Not responding to self-care strategies

## Signposting

- Pharmacy First Scotland – Emollients/ bath and shower additives

The information provided is correct at the time of publication, any information provided should be under the supervision of the Responsible Pharmacist. We hold no responsibility for any decisions made using this information.

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