

HAND ECZEMA

Hand eczema, also called hand dermatitis, is a common skin condition that makes your hands itchy, red, cracked, or covered in rashes. There may be dry, flaky skin, small blisters or crusts. It can happen on its own or alongside atopic eczema. Sometimes, it's caused by touching things that irritate the skin (contact dermatitis). Hand eczema can be painful and make everyday tasks like writing, cooking, or using a computer difficult.



Causes of Hand Eczema



- **Atopic Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis):** Often runs in families and might start in childhood. People with atopic eczema frequently also have asthma and/or hay fever.
- **Contact Dermatitis:** Can happen when your skin reacts to things like soap, shampoo, detergents, cleaning products, chemicals, dust, or if you wash your hands a lot.
- **Pompholyx (Dyshidrotic Eczema):** Causes very itchy blisters on the sides of the fingers and palms. It can be triggered by heat, sweating, stress, or sensitivity to metals.

Common Triggers



- **Irritants:** Things like soaps, detergents, cleaning products, fragranced products, and touching acidic foods.
- **Allergens:** Items such as nickel, fragrances, rubber, preservatives, and certain plants.
- **Environmental Factors:** Heat, sweating, low humidity, and using hand sanitiser too often.
- **Work-Related Risks:** Jobs in hairdressing, catering, healthcare, metal work, cleaning, or any work involving lots of water or chemicals.

Self-Management Tips

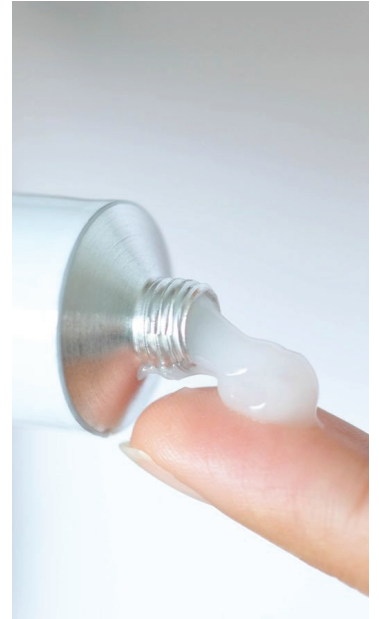


- **Reduce Contact with Irritants:** Try not to touch water, soaps, dirt, dust, and cleaning products too much. Wear vinyl or cotton gloves when using these items.
- **Use Soap Alternatives:** Wash your hands with gentle fragrance free cleansers instead of regular soap, antibacterial cleansers or foaming handwashes. Dry your hands well afterwards. Avoid paper towels. Don't use fragranced body wash or shampoos.
- **Moisturise Often:** Use thick moisturisers before work or school, and reapply after washing your hands or whenever your skin feels dry. Aim for 10–20 times a day.
- **Wear Protective Gloves:** Vinyl gloves are less likely to cause allergies than rubber or latex ones. For comfort, wear cotton gloves under them. Avoid keeping gloves on too long to prevent sweating, which can make eczema worse.
- **Avoid Known Allergens:** If a patch test shows you are allergic to something, do your best to stay away from it.

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Medical Treatments

- **Topical Treatments:** These are creams, ointments, or lotions that you put directly on your skin to help with itching, inflammation, or dryness.
 - > **Topical Corticosteroids:** These are often the first treatment for reducing inflammation. We call them Flare Control Creams. They can help with painful, cracked, and itchy skin. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions when using these products.
 - > **Other Topical Treatments:** Your doctor may suggest other ointments or creams if needed.
- **Systemic Treatments:** These treatments work throughout your whole body, not just on your skin. If your hand eczema is severe or hard to control, your healthcare provider might recommend tablets or injectable medicines or light therapy (phototherapy).
- **Infection Management:** If your skin gets a bacterial infection, you might need a course of oral antibiotics from your doctor after a swab has been taken.



When to Seek Help



If your hand eczema does not improve with simple measures within 2-4 weeks you may need to see a dermatologist.



If you think something specific is causing your eczema – ask your doctor about seeing a dermatologist for patch testing.



If your eczema makes it hard to do daily activities, seek help.

To find a dermatologist (<https://www.dermcoll.edu.au/find-a-derm/>)



Support and Resources

FOR MORE HELP

For the downloadable Eczema Care Plan, 'How To' video resources and helpful links visit
www.eczemasupport.org.au/helpful-links/



FOR PERSONALISED ADVICE, ALWAYS TALK TO A HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL.