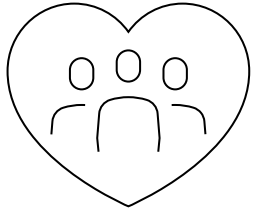


HAND ECZEMA BASICS

Hand eczema, or hand dermatitis, describes any type of eczema that develops on the hands. It is commonly job-related and can be made worse by frequent hand washing and exposure to chemicals. Hand eczema may require specific testing and treatment. It may cause itchy, dry, scaly skin that cracks and flakes. Hand eczema can be mild, moderate, or severe, and more severe forms of the condition can be extremely painful and debilitating.

Eczema Society of Canada (ESC) thanks Canadian doctors Sonja Molin, MD (dermatology), and Robert Bissonnette, MD, FRCPC (dermatology), for providing the content in this resource.



Lifestyle changes can help hand eczema, along with proper skin care and avoiding triggers when possible. Review lifestyle tips on the reverse side of this sheet.



Moisturizing the skin and **using gentle cleansers** are the first defence against hand eczema. Apply a rich moisturizer immediately after hand washing, bathing, wet work, and anytime in between.



There are many **treatments** for hand eczema, including creams or ointments that range in potency. There are also oral systemic treatments for hand eczema, as well as phototherapy. A qualified health care professional can guide you on a treatment plan, and sometimes a specialist like a dermatologist may be needed to help you treat your condition.



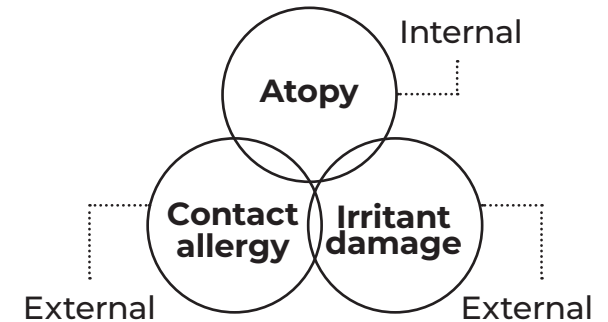
If your hand eczema has cleared up, and you are no longer using your prescription treatments, continue with a **diligent moisturizing routine**, which may help to prolong the period between flare-ups.

If your hand eczema is not getting better, speak to your health care provider about your treatment plan.

TIPS FOR LIVING WITH HAND ECZEMA:

- Where possible, avoid or minimize wet-work and excessive hand washing.
- Minimize contact with fruit juices, fruits, vegetables, and raw meat while preparing food, or wear gloves.
- Protect hands by using cotton gloves as liners under vinyl gloves.
- Avoid excessive sweating and dry conditions, which are sometimes triggers.
- Avoid scratching, which worsens the condition and may cause cracks, allowing bacteria to enter, leading to infection. Sometimes, applying a cold compress to the area reduces itch. Keep fingernails short.
- Avoid the substance(s) causing the irritation or allergy. Avoiding all substances can be very difficult – if not impossible – especially if these substances are encountered at work. Using barrier cream, wearing gloves, and practicing glove hygiene are often helpful.
- Shampoo and style hair while wearing vinyl gloves, if possible.
- Take off rings before wet-work or hand washing.
- Use emollients frequently to help restore normal skin barrier function. A thin smear of a thick barrier cream should be applied to all affected areas before work, and reapplied after washing and whenever the skin dries out.
- Stress management – stress triggers flare-ups in many people, so reducing stress may be beneficial.

INTERPLAY OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TRIGGERS CAUSING HAND ECZEMA



Atopy - an impaired skin barrier and immune system prone to atopic eczema contributes to hand eczema.

Contact allergy - coming in contact with an allergen can trigger a flare and can trigger hand eczema.

Exposure to irritants - coming in contact with irritants can trigger a flare and can trigger hand eczema.

For more information about Eczema Society of Canada, visit eczemahelp.ca

Copyright © by the Eczema Society of Canada / Société canadienne de l'eczéma, 2024-2025. All rights reserved. v2

DISCLAIMER: Information provided in this resource does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be used as a diagnostic tool. The information is up-to-date at time of publication. All medications, interventions, and treatment plans have risks and benefits, and it is important that individuals discuss their child's specific health care needs with a qualified health care professional.