



Express Eddie's Toolbox



The Importance of Skin Care In The Workplace

Occupational dermatitis is an ongoing issue for workers and managers alike.

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), approximately 50% of all working time lost to industrial illness is due to dermatitis. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that occupational skin disorders, such as dermatitis, affect about 13 million workers annually and are the second most common type of workplace illness. Including time away from work, reduced productivity, and worker's compensations claims, the cost of dermatitis exceeds \$1 billion annually.

What is occupational dermatitis?

Occupational dermatitis is an inflammation of the skin caused by working environments or contact with harmful substances. Its symptoms include irritation, redness, and swelling of the skin that may spread if left untreated. Dermatitis can result from most industrial applications, yet is most common in areas such as construction, cleaning, maintenance, and wet work where the skin is exposed to moisture and wet conditions for long periods of time. If



dermatitis isn't treated quickly and effectively, more serious long-term issues may arise, resulting in reduced productivity and lost work time.

Glove and Barrier Cream Use

Luckily, [glove](#) manufacturers are using many innovative materials to produce a wide variety of hand protection products. Many workers find that wearing gloves eliminates dermatitis on their hands. However, there is still the possibility that while gloves are very effective at keeping contaminants away from the skin, they can also cause or contribute to industrial dermatitis. Moisture produced by sweat glands often gets trapped inside the glove. This moisture build-up can cause severe skin irritation, even after the gloves have been removed. Dermatologists recommend using a protective pre-work barrier cream in combination with the gloves. It can also be used on its own if gloves aren't used.

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Hand Hygiene

An effective way to prevent dermatitis is to select and use proper [hand hygiene products](#). It is helpful to stay away from using paint thinners, gasoline, or acetone for cleaning skin because their harsh qualities are more likely to strip skin of its natural oils. Avoiding cleansers with paraffin, thinners, petrol distillates, and mineral spirits also reduces irritation.

Using an after-work cream provides an additional layer of protection. This type of cream can replenish the skin's natural oils that may have been lost throughout the work day. When choosing an after-work cream, look for one that has 15-30% fats or oils.

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