

ACNE
暗瘡

CONTACT DERMATITIS
接觸性皮膚炎

ECZEMA
濕疹

PSORIASIS
銀屑病

ROSACEA
玫瑰座瘡

STEROIDS
類固醇

WARTS
疣



CONTACT DERMATITIS

HKSH
Dermatology Centre
養和皮膚科中心

CONSULTATION HOURS

Monday to Friday 9:30am – 5:30pm
Saturday 9:00am – 1:00pm

Closed Sundays and Public Holidays
Consultation by Appointment

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What is Contact Dermatitis?

Contact dermatitis is one of the major causes of eczema. There are two types of contact dermatitis: irritant dermatitis and allergic dermatitis.

Direct skin contact with external irritants or allergens may lead to dysfunction of immune system, resulting in inflammation.

Irritant Dermatitis

Irritant dermatitis on hands is sometimes known as housewife's dermatitis and represents the most common type of dermatitis. It is usually caused by exposure to irritating substances, notably chemicals in different household cleaning products.

The epidermis (particularly the cuticle) can be damaged if one's hands are in contact with substances at extreme acidity or alkalinity for a long time during housework. Minor cuts on skin surface can further aggravate the condition by exposing the dermis to the external irritants, leading to subsequent inflammation. Redness and swelling will appear in inflamed areas and patients will experience significant itchiness and prickling sensation. In patients with chronic dermatitis, there may be overlying skin dryness. In severe cases, fissures or thickening can also be found on the skin surface.

Allergic Dermatitis

Unlike irritant dermatitis, only patients with genetic predisposition may suffer from allergic dermatitis upon contact with certain substances. Most allergens are work-related and common in the hairdressing, healthcare, construction, and dyeing industries. Other common allergens include ingredients found in some cosmetics and fragrances, and metals such as nickel and bronze in jewellery. Allergic dermatitis shares similar symptoms with eczema of other causes, i.e. redness, swelling, scaling and severe itchiness. Blisters may appear in severe allergic dermatitis and may lead to secondary bacterial infection.

Testing for the Allergens

Skin patch test is used to ascertain the clinically relevant allergens in contact allergic dermatitis. Patients will need to stop using topical steroid and antihistamine before the test. Doctors will apply a total of more than 20 common allergens onto one's back and cover them with waterproof plasters. The skin will be checked in 48 hours and 96 hours to confirm any positive reaction. Suspected commodities in causing dermatitis may also be tested based on medical history.

Treatment of Contact Dermatitis

It all begins with prevention. Those with housewife's dermatitis should wear gloves while doing housework. Remember to wash hands immediately after contact with irritable substances, and to apply moisturiser afterwards. Vaseline is particularly effective in relieving extreme skin dryness. Follow doctor's advices and avoid contact with products that contain any known allergens leading to allergic dermatitis.

In cases with severe dermatitis, topical steroid will be prescribed to relieve the skin inflammation. Oral vitamin A (retinoid) may sometimes be required for severe housewife's dermatitis. The usual course of treatment is around three to four months. Pregnancy is not advised during treatment with oral vitamin A, and liver function and blood lipid levels should be checked on a regular basis.