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<td><strong>Responsible Lead Executive Director:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Assurance Committee</strong></td>
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DERMATITIS IN HEALTH CARE WORKERS POLICY

CONTENTS

i) Consultation and Distribution Record
ii) Change Record

1. INTRODUCTION

2. AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

3. SCOPE
   3.1 Who is the Policy Intended to Benefit or Affect
   3.2 Who are the Stakeholders

4. PRINCIPAL CONTENT

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7. COMMUNICATION PLAN

8. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – MONITORING AND REVIEW

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10. SUMMARY OF POLICY

11. REFERENCES
## CONSULTATION AND DISTRIBUTION RECORD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing Author / Authors</th>
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DERMATITIS IN HEALTH CARE WORKERS POLICY

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Distribution:
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- Occupational Health & Safety Performance Group

CHANGE RECORD

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Dermatitis is a common occupational disease, which has an increased prevalence in healthcare workers (HCW). For individuals with severe disease, the condition can prove resistant to treatment, and can lead to the need to change jobs. Therefore, it is important to recognise and manage dermatitis effectively, and in a timely manner.

When work activities are recognised to lead to skin problems, employers have a duty of care under Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 2002 Regulations and the Management of Health & Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations to assess the risks, provide suitable control measures, provide information, instruction and training, and implement health surveillance where appropriate.

2. **AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES**

**AIMS**
- To describe procedures for preventing work related dermatitis amongst HWCs
- To describe procedures for dealing with HCWs presenting with symptoms of dermatitis
- To educate and inform HCWs and raise awareness of dermatitis

**PURPOSE**
- To promote awareness of dermatitis, to minimise the risk
- To disseminate information about dermatitis to all relevant staff.
- Reduce the incidence and prevalence of dermatitis in the local NHS Lanarkshire (NHSL) working population.
- To ensure optimal assessment and management of those who develop dermatitis
- To assist NHS Lanarkshire in complying with Health and Safety Legislation and Infection Prevention and Control guidance.

**OUTCOMES**
- Exposure of HCWs to hazardous substances will be eliminated or minimised as far as reasonably practicable within NHS Lanarkshire
- Where HCWs are exposed to hazardous substances within NHS Lanarkshire this will be supported by a robust risk assessment
- Any HCW exposed to hazardous substances on a regular basis following appropriate risk assessment will be monitored by suitable health surveillance where appropriate

3. **SCOPE**

3.1 **Who is the Policy intended to Benefit or Affect?**

The policy applies to all NHS Lanarkshire staff and others working within NHS Lanarkshire premises.
3.2 Who are the Stakeholders?

NHS Lanarkshire has consulted with the stakeholders listed in Section i) to produce this policy, setting out good practice on the development, implementation, monitoring and review of policies, ensuring the quality and consistency of all corporate policies.

NHS Lanarkshire take care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Data Protection Notice on our website at www.nhslanarkshire.scot or ask a member of staff for a copy of our Data Protection Notice.”

4. PRINCIPAL CONTENT

4.1 INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION & TRAINING

Education aimed at helping workers understand the risks of dermatitis and promoting good practice are common. These will cover the following information:

- Correct hand hygiene products and technique
- Use of detergents
- Careful rinsing and drying
- Correct use of disposable gloves
- Use of emollient hand creams

There is no strong evidence to confirm that this helps for those with established dermatitis. Nevertheless, it is a good practice point to follow this approach.

4.2 PREVENTION

4.2.1 General requirements

Under COSHH and MHSW Regulations, employers must make an assessment of the risks. A primary aim is to prevent the possibility of problems occurring. If this is not possible, controls must be used to minimise the risk of further problems.

The starting point for prevention of occupational dermatitis is the elimination or substitution of irritants or allergens in the work place.

4.2.2 Good Hand Hygiene and Skin Care

Careful hand washing to remove contaminants, irritants and allergens is an important part of skin care. Detergents and the mechanical trauma of repeated hand washing can themselves be a cause of dermatitis. This can be worsened if soaps are applied to dry hands, not properly rinsed off, or the hands are not dried fully. Good skin care helps prevent dermatitis. Staff should always adhere to appropriate hand hygiene techniques, use appropriate products and appropriate glove use as per National Infection Prevention and Control Manual V3(Accessible via FirstPort).
Emollient hand cream supplied by NHSL should be used to protect hands from the drying effects of regular washing and the appropriate use of alcohol based hand rub during work breaks and when off duty.

Broken areas of skin should be covered with a waterproof dressing

4.2.3 Health Surveillance of Staff
- COSHH Regulations place a responsibility on employers to perform a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of any hazard to health and to take reasonable steps to eliminate/reduce risk.
- Relevant information on this must be passed to employees. Employees have a responsibility to co-operate fully with employers in health surveillance.
- Health surveillance will be performed by staff who have had appropriate training and experience.
- Two levels of health surveillance are available. The form of health surveillance will depend on the particular circumstances of exposure: level, frequency and duration; and on the outcome of the risk assessment.

Low Level Health Surveillance (Responsible Persons)
- Low level health surveillance is appropriate where there is an identified hazard that is well controlled with a low risk to the employee. Employees should be given information on symptoms to watch for and that these should be reported to an identified responsible person: someone who has been trained by an Occupational Health (OH) professional who is involved in supervising the surveillance. The responsible person must inform the OH department of employees with identified health effects.
- Each employee identified as being exposed by risk assessment will complete an annual assessment and occupational health will be informed of the results.
- Anyone reporting symptoms will be referred to an OH professional for further investigation.
- Managers will complete an annual return of staff assessed and referred to OH

High Level Health Surveillance
High level health surveillance would only be carried out if a risk assessment highlighted a significant risk to an employee’s health. This would be carried out by Occupational Health

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Control Book Holders/Line Managers
- Ensure all staff are aware of this policy
- Complete COSHH risk assessment where there is exposure a significant risk to health is identified
- Ensure an individual risk assessment is completed where a member of staff is known to experience dermatitis
- Communicate with staff the findings of the risk assessment and the appropriate control measures
- Identify staff to receive the appropriate information, instruction and training regarding hazards and risks
5.2 Occupational Health

- Screen all applicants' pre-placement health questionnaires for indications of dermatitis and latex allergy, and arrange to meet with individuals where clarification of diagnosis is required.
- Advise managers and prospective employees about adjustments to work for those with dermatitis.
- Provide managers with information to enable them to recognise the signs and symptoms of dermatitis for referral to OH.
- Review any staff with symptoms identified by annual health surveillance administered by manager.
- Investigate all reported cases of dermatitis and latex allergy in staff.
- Report back on attendance and provide advice to staff and managers/Responsible Persons with regard to dermatitis and latex allergy.
- Maintain a register of staff with an identified dermatitis or allergy.
- Advise managers where there is a need for RIDDOR reporting.
- Provide annual health surveillance for all staff with identified work related dermatitis.
- Advise staff on the procedure for reporting any problems.
- Provide statistics to NHS Lanarkshire on health surveillance carried out.

5.3 Infection Prevention and Control Teams

- Advise staff the correct procedure for undertaking hand hygiene, and for reporting any problems, when required, at training sessions, within SICPs related e-learning opportunities, and during routine clinical visits.
- Provide ongoing education and training for staff regarding hand hygiene.
- Discuss new hand hygiene products with Occupational Health.

5.4 Responsibility of Employees

- Co-operate with Managers in the implementation of the Policy.
- Report to Manager if experiencing any symptoms.
- Report to Occupational Health if experiencing any symptoms.
- Report to Occupational Health any problems or changes to the skin.
- Comply with the advice they receive from OH or Infection Control to minimise the risk of further adverse events.
- Report to Occupational Health any specific diagnosis.
- Comply with completion of annual compulsory electronic education module on hand hygiene.
6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial considerations:
- Alternative products where required
- Cost of covering absence relating to dermatitis

6.2 Staff considerations:
- Time and support of managers/control book holders/identified responsible persons to carry out responsible persons health surveillance
- Occupational Health resources to review staff with identified symptoms
- Potential restrictions on affected staff

6.3 Education/Training/Awareness considerations:
- Staff requiring additional education or training

6.4 Environmental Impact considerations:
- Frequency of hygiene, use and disposal of associated products

7. COMMUNICATION PLAN

- The Policy and process will be communicated via the NHSL internet and intranet. Articles referring to the Policy will be carried in the Pulse and staff briefs.
- New staff members will be captured during Corporate Induction sessions.
- Existing staff should obtain this guidance from the NHSL Latex Policy and the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual V3.
- Education to medical staff will be delivered via the junior medical staff online training system.
- Robust communication and timeous cascading of information to all relevant staff groups is paramount in relation to latex issues and glove usage to ensure a safety culture is maintained.

8. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – Monitoring and Review

8.1 Policy Review
The Policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the contributing authors and a range of the Stakeholders.
The reviews, including qualitative and quantitative data, will be reported through the Staff and Organisational Development Group. Similar processes will be put in place should an issue arise within any annual cycle for any specific change to the Policy.

8.2 Health Surveillance of Staff
There is a statutory requirement to conduct health surveillance programmes, when there is a recognised risk of workers developing dermatitis. Since the risk is increased threefold in HCWs, surveillance is indicated in the healthcare setting.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
This policy meets NHS Lanarkshire’s EDIA.

10. SUMMARY OF POLICY
As dermatitis is the most common form of work related ill health this policy is designed to allow NHS Lanarkshire, managers and employees to manage the potential risks.

It provides a framework allowing the education and instruction on work practices and substances that can have a potential impact on the integrity of the skin, highlights the risks and symptoms that may be experienced with Dermatitis, Explores preventative measures and the steps that should be taken when symptoms emerge.

The policy also ensures clarity of roles in the prevention and management of dermatitis in health care workers.

11. REFERENCES
- NHS Lanarkshire Latex Policy
- Section 3F of the NHSL Health & Safety Control Book
- NHS Lanarkshire’s Dermatitis in Health Care Workers booklet
- Medical Aspects of Occupational Skin Disease (MS24). HSE.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013
- National Infection Prevention & Control Manual
- Dermatitis: Occupational Aspects of Management, Royal College of Physicians, 2009
- Tools of the trade: RCN guidance for health care staff on glove use and the prevention of contact dermatitis
DISEASE
Skin diseases are one of the most commonly reported occupational disorders. Dermatitis is the largest sub-group.

Healthcare workers are an occupational group known to be at particular risk compared to the general population. Particular hazards are frequent hand washing, and frequent use of gloves.

To cause an occupational dermatosis, a substance must penetrate the surface layer of the skin, and then provoke a reaction with the vulnerable tissue beneath. The surface layer is called the barrier layer, although only the thickness of tissue paper, is remarkably resistant to penetration.

The commonest reaction to penetration is known as eczema. When caused by contact with a substance, it is also known as contact dermatitis. Substances capable of causing contact dermatitis divide into the 2 groups of irritants and sensitisers (or allergens).

A skin irritant is any non-infective chemical or physical agent that can cause skin damage if applied to the skin for sufficient time and in sufficient concentration. In some industries, strong irritants can have an immediate effect. Within the healthcare setting, the drying effect of repeated hand washing and use of soaps can act as an irritant. The need for repeated hand washing can have the cumulative effect of causing dermatitis.

A skin sensitiser can cause an allergic reaction. There are no absolute differences between the visible effects of allergic and irritant dermatitis although the underlying mechanisms are different. Therefore, a careful history is required, and investigations may also be indicated.

CLINICAL FEATURES

Symptoms and Signs

The main signs of dermatitis are itching, redness, swelling, blistering, flaking and cracking of the skin. When dermatitis is long-term, it may produce lichenification (thickening of the skin).

It is important to establish from the history what the likely cause of the dermatitis is. The following information should be gathered:

- Past history of eczema, or other atopic conditions (hayfever, asthma).
- When the skin problem started.
- What seems to exacerbate the condition? (e.g. after using hand hygiene products and associated practices, contact with a substance or use and overuse of disposable gloves)
• How quickly the symptoms develop after contact. (If allergy is suspected, and the reaction is within a few minutes, it is more likely to be a Type 1 reaction. Alternatively, if the symptom take hours or days to develop, it is more likely to be a Type 4 reaction). See below for more information.

From this information, it may become clearer whether the underlying cause is irritant or allergic.

Type 1 (immediate hypersensitivity reactions).
Presentation is rapid and symptoms occur within 5 – 10 minutes:
- Urticaria (hives)
- Runny nose, runny and red eyes
- Wheezing/asthma
- Anaphylaxis

Type 4 (allergic contact dermatitis)
Individuals can develop a sensitivity to wide range of substances, at both work and home. There may be regular exposure to the allergen in both environments. In the case of allergic contact dermatitis to gloves, it is more likely due to the accelerators used in the manufacturing process (thiurams, carbamates and benzothiazoles) although type 4 sensitivity to latex itself has been reported. This is particularly important as these chemicals may be found in other types of gloves. Symptoms develop 12 – 24 hours after exposure and can cause red, dry and cracked skin with itching and blisters.

Urticaria
Urticaria is a skin condition caused by contact with something that irritates the skin or causes an allergic reaction. Contact urticaria is different from dermatitis. In particular, it usually occurs quickly following skin contact and disappears again within hours. Common causes of urticaria are:
- latex protein in single-use latex gloves;
- some foods (eg potatoes, fish, meat);
- cold or heat.