

Skin care Information leaflet for Health Care Workers



Introduction

Skin problems account for more than 50% of all work related conditions in Ireland. Health care staff are a particularly high risk due to the need for frequent handwashing, often with antiseptic handwashes and the widespread use of latex gloves.

Handwashing remains one of the most important tools in preventing the spread of infection and is the cornerstone of efforts in this regard.

This leaflets aims to inform staff on how to prevent skin problems and latex allergies while adhering to good infection control guidelines.

Q. Why wash hands?

A. Hands are the principal route by which infection is spread. In healthcare, infection can be transmitted easily from patient to patient, equipment to patient, healthcare worker to patient and patient to healthcare worker. Handwashing is widely recognised as the most important method of preventing hospital acquired infections..



Q What bacteria are hands carrying?

A. Resident Flora are deep seated in skin crevices, hair follicles sweat glands and beneath finger nails. They protect the skin from invasion of more harmful organisms.e.G. Gram positive cocci, Gram negative Cocci.

Transient Flora: These microorganisms are present on the surface of the skin and are a direct result of contact with other people, equipment or body sites. They can be a

major cause of spread of infection. E.g. MRSA, E.coli.

Q. Why do some staff fail to wash their hands?

- Lack of awareness of importance of same
- Lack of time or priority
- Poor Habits
- Concern about harming skin due to repeated handwashing
- Inadequate facilities

Are you guilty of not washing your hands ????



Q. How can I avoid skin care problems?

A. Do not wear gloves unnecessarily or for long periods of time

Wear gloves appropriate for the task

Ensure correct fit

Wash hands after removing gloves

Dry hands thoroughly

(gloves should never be used as substitute for handwashing and if used incorrectly may be a contributing factor to spread of infection)



Repeated handwashing or using inappropriate agents, poor technique and misuse of gloves damages the epidermis and leaves the skin vulnerable to further damage. Damage can be acute or cumulative



Q. What should I do if I develop a skin problem which I think is work related ?

A. Report it to your manager as soon as possible

Refer to Occupational Health either through your manager or self referral



General Hand care

- *Use gentle skin cleanser with warm water and dry hands thoroughly
- *Use barrier creams if provided
- *Use plenty of moisturisers and reapply frequently
- *Report any skin irritation promptly to your manager



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Occupational Health Dept

HSE West

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Tipperary North)



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