

Did You Know?

By law your employer should:

- Provide a safe and healthy workplace
- Provide training for the job
- Encourage you to report hazards
- Provide the right protection such as gloves
- Inform you about workers' compensation

The law requires that you must:

- Follow safety rules and attend safety training
- Report unsafe work practices
- Report any skin problems or other injuries as soon as possible
- Wear protective clothing which is provided
- Keep work areas clean and tidy

Australian Capital Territory
www.workcover.act.gov.au

South Australia
www.workcover.com

New South Wales
www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Tasmania
www.workcover.tas.gov.au

Northern Territory
www.worksafe.nt.gov.au

Victoria
www.workcover.vic.gov.au

OASCC
www.detailstocome.com.au

Western Australia
www.workcover.wa.gov.au

Queensland
www.workcover.qld.gov.au

This publication was partially funded by the Office of the Australian Safety and Compensation Council and by the Department of Health and Ageing

Food Handlers

Some HANDY advice for the future Food Handler...



Food Handlers include:

- Chefs, cooks, fast-food attendants
- Bakers and pastry cooks
- Kitchen hands
- Butchers, poultry workers and fish mongers
- Delicatessen attendants
- Waiters and waitresses
- Bartenders
- Food factory workers

As a food handler you need your hands to be in good condition when preparing and touching food. Some of the things that a food handler touches or tasks they perform can cause dermatitis.

What is dermatitis?

Work-related dermatitis is a skin condition caused by things that people touch at work. The hands are most commonly affected.

Dermatitis affecting food handlers:

- Irritant contact dermatitis - caused by things that dry out and damage the skin. Common irritants include handling moist foods, hand washing,

dishwashing, detergents and sweating when wearing gloves.

- Allergic contact dermatitis - occurs when someone becomes allergic to something they touch at work. Allergic dermatitis shows up hours or days after contact. Common causes for food handlers are garlic and onions.
- Contact urticaria- also an allergy to something contacted at work. The reaction starts immediately after contact (normally within 30 minutes). Common causes are seafood, flour, chicken, some fruits and vegetables and latex gloves.



Prevent skin problems at work

- Apply moisturising cream regularly
- Wear suitable gloves for the job. For food preparation wear vinyl or clear plastic (polyethylene) gloves and NOT latex gloves (some people are allergic to natural rubber latex)



- Take rings off at work, as soap and water can get trapped underneath causing dermatitis

Remember ... You are at high risk of dermatitis, if you have a history of eczema, asthma or hay fever, even if you haven't had it since you were a baby.

Case Study

Matt - Part-time cook at a fast food restaurant

Matt was a 16 year-old who worked at a fast food restaurant after school and on weekends. He was working to save money to buy a car. His duties included cooking and frying foods. It was also his job to clean the equipment, stove and grill at the end of the day.

Matt found that handling moist foods and the cleaning products used on the stoves and grills stung his hands along with a lot of hand washing made his skin feel very dry.

Matt had eczema as a baby, but it had completely gone away before he was five years-old.

After seeing a doctor, Matt was told he had irritant dermatitis to the cleaning products and from all the hand washing and handling of wet and raw foods.

Matt's workplace now provides him with thick rubber gloves when he is cleaning and also provides him with vinyl food handler's gloves when he is touching raw food.

Points to learn from Matt's case

Matt's skin condition could have been prevented if:

- His workplace had supplied him with the right gloves at the start
- He had used a moisturiser at the end of his shift and before bed
- He had told his boss that he was having skin problems as soon as they started

Stop this from happening to you