



NORTH TEXAS ALLERGY & ASTHMA ASSOCIATES

PREBYTERIAN OFFICE

Professional Building 2
8220 Walnut Hill Lane, Suite 101
Dallas, TX 75231
Tel: (214) 369-1901
Fax: (214) 369-1905

BAYLOR OFFICE

Medical Pavilion 1
4708 Alliance Blvd, Suite 610
Plano, TX 75093
Tel: (972) 596-4383
Fax: (972) 596-4325

Web: www.texasallergyonline.com

CHEMICAL/IRRITANT SKIN RASH (CONTACT DERMATITIS)

What is contact dermatitis?

Contact dermatitis is an inflammation of the skin that happens when an irritating substance touches the skin. The rash is usually just in the area that touched the substance.

How does it occur?

Contact dermatitis occurs when the skin touches a substance that irritates the skin or causes an allergic reaction. Common causes of contact dermatitis from irritants are soaps, detergents, solvents, waxes, polishes, and/or hand cleaners. Common causes of contact dermatitis from allergic reactions are perfumes, cosmetics, hair dyes, jewelry, nail polish, and deodorants. Other substances that might cause contact dermatitis are rubber, nickel, and poison ivy.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of contact dermatitis include:

- itching
- swelling
- redness of the skin
- blisters that may break open and ooze, crust, or scale, possibly causing an infection

How is it diagnosed?

We will ask about possible irritants that may have touched your skin recently. We will look at the entire rash, noting where it is and how it looks in each area (for example, whether it is on one or both hands). We may also perform specific test called PATCH test. In these tests tiny amounts of suspected chemicals are placed on your back and read at different intervals. These allergy tests can identify which of many possible chemicals are causing your symptoms.

How is it treated?

We will prescribe cream or ointment to stop the itching and other symptoms. You may also need to take pills to help stop any itching and allergic reaction.

How long will the effects last?

With treatment, the rash should get better over the next few days.

How can I take care of myself?

Follow these important instructions:

- Avoid further irritation of the skin where you have contact dermatitis.
- Avoid further contact with the substance that appears to cause the dermatitis.
- Put cool, moist cloths on the areas of skin with dermatitis.

How can I help prevent contact dermatitis?

If you know what substance caused the dermatitis, make sure that the substance is not one of the ingredients in the cosmetic, cleaning, or other products that you use. If you are accidentally exposed to the substance, wash the exposed area immediately and thoroughly. If you are allergic to nickel, find out what metal is in jewelry before you wear it. Whether or not you know what substances give you the rash, it may be helpful to:

- Learn to recognize poison oak, poison ivy, and ragweed, and avoid contact with them.
- Use hypoallergenic cosmetics.
- Pat your skin dry instead of rubbing it.
- Try to avoid using solvents and chemicals, and wear heavy gloves when you must use them.
- Use a dishwasher, or wear rubber gloves when you wash dishes.