

HOW TO...

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...MANAGE ECZEMA

HOW TO REDUCE THE COST OF ECZEMA IN THE CATERING INDUSTRY

The detrimental impact of eczema in the workplace is the focus of this year's National Eczema Week (11 to 18 September).

Six million people in the UK suffer from eczema, which can be a huge cause of economic loss to employers and employees. It is one of the most common occupational skin diseases and 80% of

newly diagnosed work-related skin problems are eczema caused by exposure to irritant substances.

Figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show that every year the number of new cases of eczema in catering is twice the average for all other industries. Chefs, cooks and catering assistants are all considered high-risk jobs. Frequent contact with water, for example, washing dishes and hands a lot, and some types of food, such as onions and citrus fruits, are irritants that can cause hand eczema – a type of

which is contact eczema, also known as contact dermatitis.

Themed "six million reasons to support", National Eczema Week aims to raise awareness amongst sufferers and employers of the issues surrounding eczema at work. As part of the week, the National Eczema Society (NES) has developed new literature on contact dermatitis and eczema at work. Copies are available free of charge in September on the society's helpline on 0800 089 1122 or by ordering online at www.eczema.org.

Margaret Cox, chairman of the

NES, explains: "People often overlook the huge impact eczema has in the workplace. Sadly, this can be extremely detrimental to sufferers, with some even being forced to give up work because of their condition. It's vital that employers are aware of these challenges faced by their staff, so they can ensure best practice in the workplace for eczema sufferers."

HOW TO PREVENT IRRITANT AND ALLERGIC CONTACT DERMATITIS

- The most common irritants are soaps and detergents, so where possible, use a dishwasher rather than washing up by hand
- Use tools to handle food rather than your hands
- Use a food processor instead of chopping or mixing by hand
- Wear non-latex gloves where possible, especially when cleaning. Care needs to be taken when selecting gloves if you are allergic to any materials used in gloves
- Do not use abrasive skin cleaners and keep the use of disinfectants to a minimum
- Dry your hands thoroughly with a soft, disposable paper towel
- Protect your hands by moisturising them regularly with an emollient that's free from fragrances and preservatives

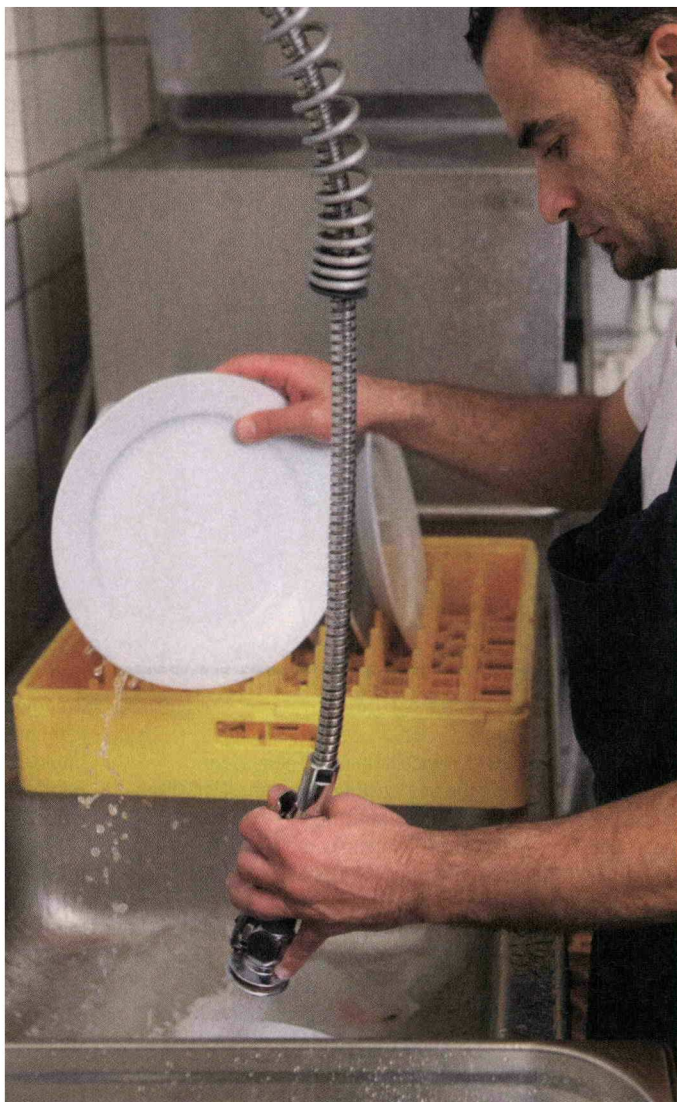
FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT OF ECZEMA

www.eczema.org

www.bad.org.uk
British Association of Dermatologists

www.myhandeczema.co.uk
Website that gives information about the causes, management and treatment options for hand eczema, with a dedicated section on high-risk jobs including catering





HOW TO MANAGE AND TREAT CONTACT DERMATITIS

Once contact dermatitis has occurred, management of the skin is very important. Apart from the avoidance of irritants, there are the following treatment options:

Emollients

Soothe and relieve dry skin, producing an oily layer which traps water beneath it. The aim is to restore the skin's barrier and rehydrate the skin.

Topical steroids

Help to reduce inflammation, make the skin less red, hot and itchy or sore and speed up the healing of the skin.

A good skin care routine

Good general skin care measures are essential. It can take several months for the skin to recover completely from an attack of contact dermatitis so even when it looks normal it is still vulnerable.

Additional treatments

In very severe cases of hand eczema that are not responding to treatment with topical steroids and emollients, other treatments may be needed such as light treatment (PUVA) or immunosuppressants. There is also a relatively new oral treatment now available called [alitretinoin](#) – developed for those with severe chronic hand eczema which has not responded to treatment.