

Contact Dermatitis

You have an eruption of your skin that is most likely caused by sensitivity to a product or an article that has touched your skin. Although it could be a new exposure that you reacted to, allergic reactions develop often to substances that a person has used repeatedly without previous problems.

Instructions:

- For a period of at least 14 days, discontinue using as many things as possible that touch the area - all cosmetics, lotions, and soaps. Wear no jewelry on affected areas.
- If your face is involved, use a soap substitute to wash (CeraVe, Cetaphil or Aveeno) or no soap and lukewarm/cool water (not hot).
- If your face is involved (especially around your eyes) and you use nail polish, stop using nail polish. Stop curling eyelashes. Try not to touch your face as you may be transferring an allergen to the face. Also, stop using sprays around your face (such as perfumes or hairspray) or sprays around the house (i.e., for cleaning). If you must use hairspray, cover your face with a towel when spraying your hair. Be sure to keep shampoos, cream rinses, hair dyes, etc, off your face. Change your shampoo to Free and Clear shampoo.
- If body is involved, use soap to only select areas (i.e., underarms, breasts, groin, and feet) and use a mild soap like unscented Dove (bar soap) for Sensitive Skin or fragrance-free Kiss My Face and again, lukewarm (not hot) water.
- If your body is involved, try wearing as much cotton as possible, especially white cotton.
- If the area around your mouth is involved, stop chewing gum, any lip balms except Vaseline, mouthwashes, fluoride rinses, tooth whiteners, foods with cinnamon, and change your toothpaste to Cleure Toothpaste without fluoride and without sodium laurel sulfate.
- If the tops of your feet are involved, try wearing white cotton socks and canvas shoes (like a Keds type shoe).
- If the tops of your hands are involved, try washing just your palms and tips of your fingers (and not the tops of your hands) if and when you can.
- Apply the prescription cream or ointment you receive twice daily until your rash clears or as long as directed. (These are usually medicines you are not to stay on long-term.)

- When your eruption has cleared and has stayed clear, you can try re-introducing products that you have stopped, but re-introduce products one at a time, at approximately four-day intervals. You can often determine which product you are reacting to with this method as skin reactions are not immediate and can take days to develop.
- If your eruption continues to be a problem, sometimes a skin biopsy is done, but more often, I suggest patch testing. Please note that patch testing is not like scratch or prick testing that you may have had at an allergist. There are no needles. Instead, ingredients are put on your back under tape for a few days. You cannot get your back wet during the days you are undergoing patch testing. This testing checks for contact allergy to the most common skin allergens. Sometimes I recommend seeing an expert like Dr. Andrew Scheman, a dermatologist who is a national contact dermatitis expert who just happens to practice nearby (in Northbrook, phone 847-480-1111) or Dr. Jonathan Silverberg (through Northwestern downtown).
- Idea for sensitive skin: Vanicream products (made by Pharmaceutical Specialties - Their "famous" cream is called Vanicream and they make a sunscreen also called Vanicream as well as a shampoo called Free and Clear), Cetaphil liquid cleanser, CeraVe liquid cleanser, plain Vaseline petroleum jelly, Kiss My Face soap (at Whole Foods type stores), an app on your phone called SkinSafe, Toms of Maine toothpaste, and (if you are allergic to nickel) a DMG or dimethylglyoxime nickel test kit (available online by Allerderm Laboratories or by Delasco Dermatologic Labs).