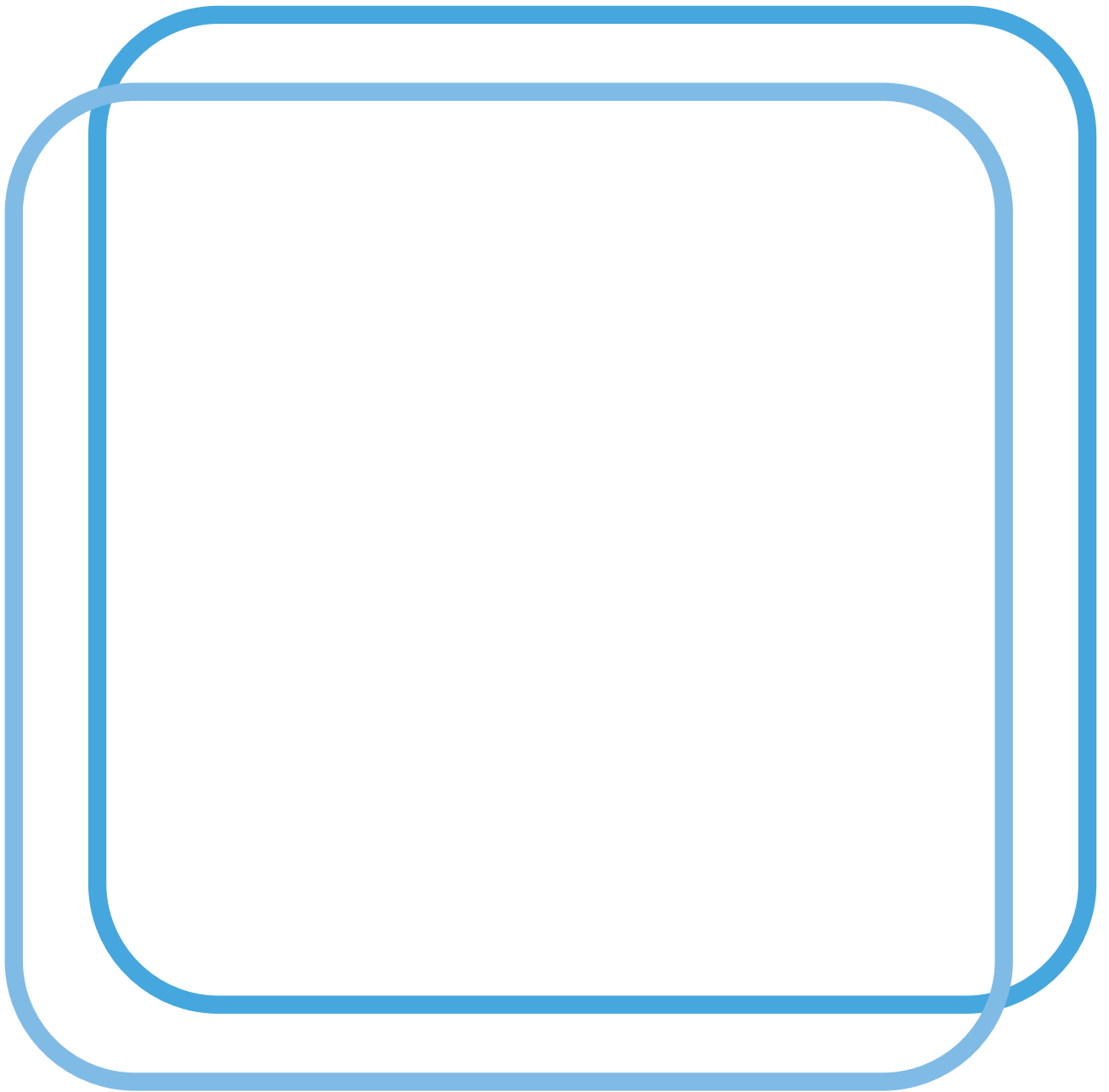


Dermatitis in Catering



Work-Related Contact Dermatitis in Catering



Safer Business - Better Health

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Introduction

Why focus on work-related contact dermatitis?

Work-related contact dermatitis accounts for a significant proportion of work-related ill health and therefore a specific Skin Disease National Project has been set up to address this.

The 2004/5 Self-Reported Work-Related illness survey estimated the prevalence of self-reported work-related skin disease in Great Britain as 29,000. However, the true figure is likely to be higher than this.

What is dermatitis?

Dermatitis is an inflammatory condition of the skin. It can vary in severity. Dermatitis is not infectious, so it cannot be passed from one person to another.

Typical signs of dermatitis are: dryness, itching, redness, swelling, blistering, cracking, flaking and bleeding. In severe cases nail can also be affected. Work-related dermatitis is caused or made worse by work. It can develop as a consequence of workplace exposure to physical, chemical (including 'wet work') or biological agents or to mechanical forces.

There are two types of contact dermatitis:

- 1) **irritant contact dermatitis** caused by prolonged or short heavy exposure to hazardous agents. The skin is stripped of its natural barrier, allowing an irritant substance to infiltrate the skin.
- 2) **allergic contact dermatitis (contact with a skin sensitiser)** caused by an immune system response to an particular agent which the suffer is allergic to.

The most commonly affected part of the body is the hands. Hand dermatitis accounts for almost 75% of all dermatitis. This is because hands are often used as tools, without suitable precautions, allowing exposure of the skin to hazardous agents.

How does exposure happen?

The main cause of contact dermatitis in the catering industry is frequent contact with water, soaps and cleaning products.

A causative agent may come into contact with the skin in the following ways:-
cont'd

I've heard I have to do health surveillance - is this correct? (cont'd)

out the relevant procedure, and is charged with reporting to the employer the findings of the procedure. This person may be a supervisor, foreman, first-aider, the employer or themselves.

Where there is a risk of dermatitis, the responsible person is expected to:

- carry out skin condition assessment prior to someone joining the company or as soon as possible after an employee has started work
- carry out periodic checking of the hands and forearms of employees for early signs of dermatitis

- keep records of the skin checks
- inform the employer of the outcomes of the skin checks so that he or she can take necessary action
- if there is an outbreak advise the employer to seek expert help for managing this and for restoring adequate control of exposure

The 'responsible person' may carry out skin inspection by direct observation of the skin using a questionnaire or some other method within his/her competence.

Do I have to report to anyone if an employee has contact dermatitis?

Yes, you must report it to the enforcing authority if:

- a) a doctor notifies you that your employee suffers from work related contact dermatitis; and

- b) the ill employees current job involves the corresponding work activity specified in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)

What work activities that could cause contact dermatitis are specified in RIDDOR?

The list includes any work involving exposure to any of the following agents:

- a) biocides, anti-bacterials, preservatives or disinfectants;
- b) strong acids, strong alkalis, strong solution (e.g. brine) and oxidising agents including domestic bleach or reducing agents;
- c) soaps and detergents;
- d) plants and plant-derived material including in particular the daffodil, tulip and chrysanthemum families, the parsley family (carrots,

- parsnips, parsley and celery), garlic and onion, hardwoods and the pine family;
- e) fish, shell-fish or meat;
- f) sugar or flour; or
- g) any other known irritant or sensitising agent including in particular any chemical bearing the warning 'may cause sensitisation by skin contact' or 'irritating to the skin'

This list is not exhaustive but represents the most likely agents that catering staff may be exposed to.

The following is a check list to help you get started. It is recommended that it is used in conjunction with the risk assessment section and the COSHH section.

I've heard I have to do health surveillance - is this correct? (cont'd)

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Work-related Contact Dermatitis in Catering Checklist

This checklist has been designed as an aid to help you in assessing contact dermatitis hazards within your business. This can be used in conjunction with the risk assessment sheet and the COSHH section to help identify possible hazards.

Name of business:	
Nature of business:	
Address:	
Name of person completing:	Date:

	Section 1	Yes	No
1	Does your premises have COSHH assessments for all hazardous substances on the premises?		
2	Do you have safety data sheets for all hazardous substances?		

	Section 2	Yes	No
1	Do you/your employees know what contact dermatitis is?		
2	Have you considered ensuring that employees wear gloves for all types of work?		
3	Do you/your employees know how to correctly put on and remove protective gloves?		
4	Are you actively avoiding the use of latex gloves?		

	Section 3	Yes	No
1	Do you have a nominated person who conducts health surveillance?		
2	Is this surveillance recorded?		
3	Have you ever reported a case of contact dermatitis as a reportable illness?		

	Section 4	Yes	No
1	Do you/your employees regularly immerse their hands in water?		
2	Do you/ your employees directly handle wet/damp work cloths?		
3	Do you provide hand cream* for after wet working * Use appropriate creams that will not contaminate food or cause cross contamination, e.g. from a dispenser, hypoallergenic, fragrance free and nut oil free.		

	Section 5	Yes	No
	Are you/your employees aware that the following are irritants? Cleaning Detergents Soaps Wet Working		

	Section 6	Yes	No
	Are you/your employees aware that the following are skin sensitizers Flour Meat Shell Fish / Fish Garlic and Onion Parsley Family (carrots, parsnips, celery and parsley) Latex rubber		

	Section 7	Yes	No
1	Are you / your employees aware that once sensitisation has occurred they will never stop being sensitive to the allergen?		
2	Are you / your employees aware that once sensitisation has occurred the sensitive skin area is highly likely to spread to other body parts?		

NOTE

This checklist is purely produced to start you thinking of what hazards / controls you have at the premise. The lists are NOT exhaustive and there maybe hazards / controls that have not been covered.