



SKIN HEALTH SURVEILLANCE – ADVICE FOR EMPLOYEES

Introduction:

This information is aimed at employees whose work involves risks associated with work-related skin diseases.

What Substances can cause Skin Diseases?

There are a number of substances that can cause skin disease, and these include solvents, latex, animal dander, disinfectants, soaps and wet-work (frequent or prolonged contact with water).

What can I do to, reduce my risk?

Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations, your employer is legally required to undertake a risk assessment of the workplace in order to identify any potential hazards and where possible, eliminate these. Where it is not possible to eliminate the substance, then controls must be implemented to protect those working in these areas. These controls can include PPE (personal Protective Equipment) such as gloves. Therefore, in order to reduce your risk, it is important that you adhere to these control measures at all times and ensure any PPE (personal protective equipment) is in a good state of repair. You should also avoid direct contact between unprotected hands and substances, products and wet-work, ensure any contamination is washed from the skin as soon as possible and the skin thoroughly dried, protect the skin through applying barrier creams and moisturisers regularly and particularly at the end of the day, and check hands regularly for signs of itchy, dry, or red skin. In order to monitor the effectiveness of control measures, it is also important that you engage fully in the health surveillance programme. This ensures that any early symptoms that may indicate sensitisation is picked up at the earliest stage and thus reduce the risk of you developing skin disease.

What signs may I experience that suggests that I may be developing skin disease?

Early signs of skin disease may include:

- Flaking
- Scaling
- Cracks
- Blisters
- Swelling

If you develop any of these symptoms do not wait until your next routine health surveillance to report these, but report to your manager and OH as soon as they occur, so that they can be fully investigated. If the symptoms are severe, please also arrange to speak to your GP.

Health Surveillance

To monitor your health, you will be asked by your manager and/or Occupational Health to complete a screening questionnaire prior to commencing work and then yearly. It is important that you complete this form accurately and in full. Depending on the risk assessment and / or if you are reporting any symptoms, you will be contacted by Occupational Health for an assessment. This may include a referral to an Occupational Physician.

Showing symptoms consistent with skin disease or being formally diagnosed with a skin condition, does not necessarily mean that you would be considered unfit for your role. Instead, it may mean that additional controls to limit your exposure are implemented to enable to you work without risk to your health.