

PREVENTING SKIN RASH IN CONSTRUCTION WORK

Do you know someone who has a skin rash?

If so, you may be wondering

- Can I get the rash if I shake his hand?

Or do you have a skin problem?.....

If so, you may be thinking

- Can the rash be cured?
- Can I continue to do my current work?



Cement allergy



Epoxy resin allergy

In 2001, Ministry of Manpower found that 47 workers from the construction industry had skin problems caused by work.

In 2002, 31 workers were affected.

What about 2003?
It depends on you.



Skin burn due to wet cement inside workers' boots

Inform your supervisor early and see a doctor so that they can help you get well.

Do not suffer in silence.

If the skin rash is due to work

It is usually not contagious - you will not get your friend's rash when you shake his hand and neither will you pass it to him if you have a rash. In most cases it can be cured if you know what it is in your work that caused the rash.

Usually, the rash affects the hands and arms but sometimes it may affect the whole body. The common causes of skin rash are chemicals like cement, epoxy resins, thinners, fibreglass and oils. Skin rash that is due to work can take many different forms, some mild and some severe. Usually it starts with redness and itchiness and sometimes there may be swelling and blisters.

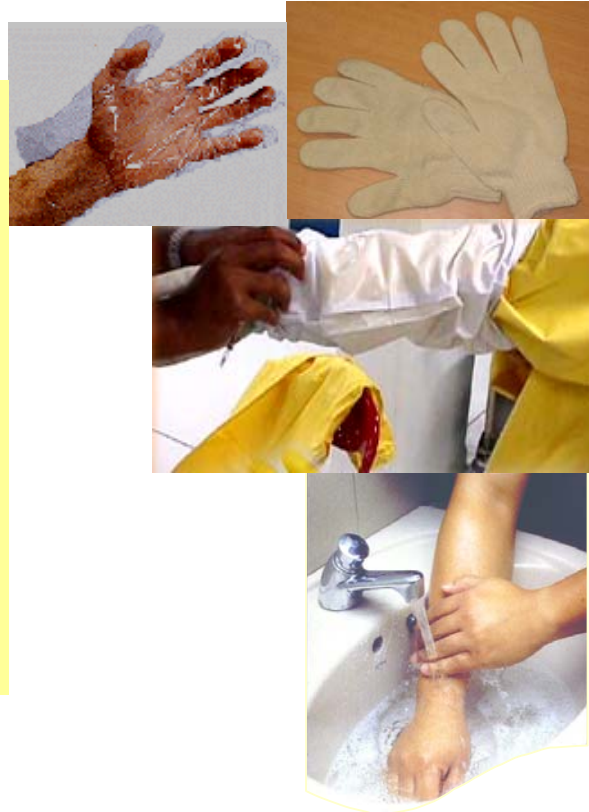
If the doctor finds that your rash is due to allergy to a particular chemical e.g. cement, you may need to change job as even a little contact with the chemical can cause the rash to appear again.

If the rash is not due to allergy, then you should be able to continue doing the same work provided you wear the necessary personal protective equipment and work carefully.

How can I prevent it?

Any worker in the construction industry can develop a skin rash if care is not taken. If you do not have a rash now, you should prevent yourself from getting a rash from work by taking a few simple steps.

- Change your work clothes everyday
- If you are working with cement, use thin plastic or rubber gloves with cotton gloves inside. If possible, wear a plastic sleeve over your long-sleeved shirt
- Do not touch chemicals unnecessarily – always find out what you have to wear to protect yourself
- If you have touched some chemicals, wash your hands with lots of water as soon as possible. To remove enamel paint stains, use soya bean cooking oil instead of thinner
- Wash your face and arms during work breaks and before going home



If you are a manager or supervisor, you have a very important part to play in preventing skin problems. You can

- Provide your workers with the correct size and type of protective clothing
- Provide adequate washing facilities
- Keep the workplace and equipment clean
- Change to a less allergenic cement
- Make sure that your workers are observing safe work procedures and wearing the correct type of gloves, safety boots/shoes and sleeves when working.
- Inform your workers about the health hazards of working with cement. This information is found in the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) provided by your cement supplier.

Ministry of Manpower
Occupational Safety and Health Division
18 Havelock Road #03-02
Singapore 059764

Internet: <http://www.mom.gov.sg/oshd/>
Email: mom_oshd@mom.gov.sg

