

IRRITANT CONTACT DERMATITIS

Irritant contact dermatitis is a skin condition, which consists of red, dry, scaly, inflamed and itchy areas. The dermatitis refers to the actual appearance of the skin. Contact refers to the fact that something has come in contact with the skin, which produces the dermatitis. Irritant refers to the fact that the material and/or materials coming in contact with the skin can produce a low-grade irritation.

Irritant contact dermatitis normally occurs when a number of factors intervene together. It is more common when the skin is dry to begin with such as in people with inherited forms of eczema or in the wintertime. In addition, forced air heating produces low relative humidity and this predisposes the skin to irritation. We all come into contact with products, which may contribute, to the irritation of our skin such as shampoos, soaps, detergents, and various work-related materials. It is important to realize that it may not be one specific product, which is producing the problem, but a combination of all different products together along with the current environmental conditions.

Irritant contact dermatitis is treated with various topical medications. Cortisone creams rubbed in the skin help significantly in reversing the changes in the skin. It may take quite a while for the skin to heal completely even though it looks normal. It is not uncommon for dermatitis to come back to a small degree. Usually the prescription creams I will prescribe are rubbed into the skin twice a day, once in the morning, once at night. As the condition improves, the cream can be applied less frequently.

Because this type of problem occurs due to a combination of factors, it may be a one-time event and may never return. If the problem continues to come back, it may be necessary to do further testing. If you have any other questions regarding this condition, please do not hesitate to ask me.