
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTION OF SKIN INJURY DUE TO HANDWASHING

Frequent handwashing can be irritating to the skin. Here are some ways to promote intact skin:

1. Use tepid, not hot water. Mechanical action, soap and thoroughness of hand washing are important.
2. Use soap that is gentle on the skin whenever possible. Products that have moisturizing properties or ones specifically formulated for health care professionals may be better.
3. After handwashing, use paper towels to pat the skin dry. Do not rub to avoid further skin irritation.
4. Ensure hands are dry prior to donning gloves. Moisture under gloves may cause further irritation.
5. Use hand sanitizer that has a moisturizer in it whenever possible.
6. Be gentle with your hands when off shift. Use emollient cream and apply when skin is freshly washed and slightly damp to hasten absorption and keep moisture.
7. Avoid heavy creams and petroleum jelly during your shift as they may not be able to work effectively due to frequency of hand washing and may cause difficulty with donning gloves.
8. Use cream, then cotton gloves to cover your hands at bedtime to moisturize the hands effectively.
9. Ensure adequate rest, nutrition and water intake to keep your skin healthy.
10. Keep a journal when skin irritation becomes worse. Food allergies can contribute to skin flare-ups.
11. Manage stress as best as you can to help prevent skin conditions like eczema.
12. If skin integrity becomes worse or chronic, consult with your health care provider.

If you have clinical questions related to Health, Safety and Wellness at the workplace, please contact OHN.clinic@fnha.ca