



GOALS

This safety session should teach employees to:

- Be more aware of potential skin problems on the job.
- Know the personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene procedures to avoid them.

Applicable Regulations: 29 CFR 1910.1200 (Hazard Communication) and 1910.132 (Personal Protection Equipment)



1. Our skin protects us, and we need to protect it.

- Skin disease is a common on-the-job illness.
- Our skin serves as a vital barrier to protect us from germs, chemicals, wind, cold, and heat.
- The skin contains small openings, or pores, that let us perspire.
- Those invisible openings, however, can also allow hazardous substances into the body if the skin is not protected properly.

2. There are many common causes of skin problems.

- Cuts and abrasions let bacteria in and lead to infections.
- Cold can lead to chapped, sensitive skin, and frostbite can actually destroy skin.
- Heat and overexposure to sun can lead to skin burns.
- Biological agents, such as bacteria, fungi, or viruses, can also cause skin problems.
- Insect bites and poisonous plants can lead to allergic reactions, rashes, and infections.
- Exposure to chemicals can also lead to an assortment of skin problems—ranging from minor to life threatening.

3. Proper PPE can sharply reduce your chance of skin infections.

- The right choice of gloves can protect your hands from many hazards.
 - Wear warm or insulated gloves in cold weather, and watch out for signs of possible frostbite.
 - Wear lightweight gloves when working outdoors in hot weather.
 - Work gloves can protect you from poisonous plants and insect bites.
 - Latex gloves can protect you from bloodborne pathogens and exposure to many chemicals.
 - Special gloves may be needed to protect you from corrosives (strong acids or bases) that can burn your skin.
- Follow directions on safety data sheets (SDSs) and product labels to determine exactly what type of PPE is necessary.
- For some chemicals, gloves alone may be insufficient—you may need an apron or full body suit as well.



4. Identify the skin hazards associated with your job, and take precautions.

- Take cuts and abrasions seriously—wash, disinfect, and bandage them immediately. If a wound shows signs of infection, seek proper medical attention before the problem gets serious.
- Use moisturizing lotions to protect your skin from chapping in cold weather.
- Use strong sunscreen, and limit your exposure to hot sun to prevent sunburn.
- Use insect repellents to reduce your chance of bites and stings.
- In addition to wearing gloves, always wash well as soon as possible after any chance of exposure to poisonous plants or to any chemical irritants.
- Barrier creams can protect your hands from mild irritants if you are unable to use gloves for a particular operation.

5. Chemical hazards in the workplace can create a variety of skin hazards.

- Exposure to chemicals can cause a skin condition known as dermatitis.
- Symptoms of dermatitis include redness, rashes, itching, and swelling.
- In addition, you can develop an allergic reaction known as sensitization.
- Both may appear after only one exposure or after repeated exposures.
- Once you become sensitized to a substance, you may have a strong reaction to even a minor exposure.
- Many workers who use latex gloves regularly may become sensitized to latex and should switch to nonlatex materials immediately if they begin to develop a problem.

6. Follow safety and health guidelines.

- Read the SDS for the substances you are using. You may be able to reduce your risk by substituting a less hazardous substance.
- Act promptly if you are exposed to hazardous substances or other irritants.
- Wash all exposed parts of your body, including hair, thoroughly for several minutes.
- Use a mild soap; avoid harsh industrial detergents that can cause further irritation.
- See a doctor if you have persistent signs of irritation or infection.



DISCUSSION POINTS:

Discuss factors that can cause skin problems in your workplace. Recommend proper PPE and procedures to avoid irritation or injury.



CONCLUSION:

Some occupational skin diseases can cause long-lasting problems, so it is very important to protect your skin at both work and home.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

Have your workers take the Skin Protection quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can decide whether they understand about the skin hazards in your workplace and how to protect themselves or whether this topic needs further review and training.



SKIN PROTECTION QUIZ

- 1. Symptoms of the common skin condition called "dermatitis" include redness, swelling, and itching.**
a. True b. False
- 2. The best way to get your skin really clean after work is to wash your hands with an industrial detergent or a solvent.**
a. True b. False
- 3. You should wash, disinfect, and bandage all cuts and abrasions before you start working.**
a. True b. False
- 4. The safety data sheet (SDS) will tell you if you need personal protective equipment (PPE) before working with a substance.**
a. True b. False
- 5. Sensitization is an allergic reaction that can develop only from repeated exposure to an irritant over time.**
a. True b. False
- 6. Working in extremely cold or hot conditions can cause skin problems.**
a. True b. False
- 7. You can choose to use either gloves or barrier creams.**
a. True b. False
- 8. Our skin is a vital barrier to protect us from germs, chemicals, wind, cold, and heat.**
a. True b. False
- 9. You should wash your hands promptly and thoroughly after working in an area with potential skin irritants.**
a. True b. False
- 10. Fortunately, skin disease is one of the least common on-the-job illnesses.**
a. True b. False

When you have completed this quiz, turn it in to your supervisor.

Name: _____

Date: _____



ANSWERS TO SKIN PROTECTION QUIZ

1. a. True.
2. b. False. Wash with soap and water. Detergents or solvents are too harsh and can irritate your skin.
3. a. True.
4. a. True.
5. b. False. Sensitization can also develop from only one exposure.
6. a. True.
7. b. False. Barrier creams and lotions should be used only to protect against mild "irritants." They do not provide as good protection as gloves.
8. a. True.
9. a. True.
10. b. False. Skin disease is the most common on-the-job illness. Don't take skin problems lightly.