

## Rationale

- Irritant dermatitis is a type of eczema triggered by contact with a particular substance. Once treated most people can expect their symptoms to improve and/or clear up completely if the irritant or allergen can be identified and removed or avoided.
- It is most commonly caused by irritants such as soaps, washing powders, detergents, solvents or regular contact with water.
- Treatment normally involves avoiding the allergen or irritant and treating symptoms with over counter (OTC) emollients and topical corticosteroids.

## Recommendations for clinicians

- Provide the patient with a 'non-prescription' sheet or a patient information leaflet to promote education about self-limiting conditions suitable for self-care when appropriate.
- Advise patients of safe and effective self-care measures:
  - Use emollients frequently and apply liberally.
  - Avoid known irritants as much as possible. If contact is made with a known irritant wash the area with warm water and an emollient.
  - Change products that irritate the skin. Check the ingredients on make-up or soap to make sure it does not contain any irritants or allergens; in some cases, you may need to contact the manufacturer or check online to get this information
  - Use gloves to protect hands when in contact with irritants, but remove them occasionally as sweating can make symptoms worse. Cotton gloves under rubber gloves may be helpful if rubber gloves irritate the skin
- Advise patients to seek medical attention and consider treatment with a prescription in the following circumstances:
  - When symptoms are persistent, recurrent or severe and not responding to OTC products .

### Example of products available to buy over the counter\*

Hydrocortisone 1% Cream - **Not licensed for under 10 years (£3.50-£4.00 for 15g)**

Emollients – depending on the severity of dryness, can use lotions, creams and ointments. Various available in a variety of sizes and prices vary.

For further information see Self-care forum <http://www.selfcareforum.org/>, NHS UK <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>, Patient UK <https://patient.info/>

\*Prices correct at time of writing and are subject to change

