

## Appendix C

### Dermatitis

#### Background

1. Occupational skin diseases are a widespread problem. Skin diseases caused by substances and processes used in the workplace are commonly known as dermatitis.
2. Dermatitis is a general term that is used to describe an inflammation of the skin and is divided into two classifications; Allergic Contact Dermatitis and Irritant Contact Dermatitis.
3. The following are guidelines for adjudicating claims for diseases of the skin.

#### Guidelines

1. Claims will be considered where contact with substances or chemicals found in the workplace causes Allergic Contact Dermatitis or Irritant Contact Dermatitis.
2. Allergic Contact Dermatitis affects the body's immune system. The immune system protects the body from sickness and the cells in the body react when a foreign substance enters it. A foreign substance could be a chemical absorbed into the skin.
3. Symptoms of Allergic Contact Dermatitis include: inflammation, itching, pain, redness, swelling, and the formation of small blisters or itchy, red circles with a white centre.
4. Irritant Contact Dermatitis is an inflammation caused by substances or chemicals in the workplace that come in direct contact with the skin.
5. Symptoms of Irritant Contact Dermatitis include: redness, blisters, scales or crusts on the skin. In the workplace, Irritant Contact Dermatitis can develop after either:
  - a. A short and intense exposure to a substance or chemical.
  - b. A repeated or prolonged and low level exposure to a substance or chemical.
6. In the workplace, dermatitis may be caused by contact with a number of substances including, but not limited to, the following:
  - a. Strong irritants, such as: acids, some metals or organic compounds.
  - b. Mild irritants, such as: soap, detergents, mild acids or alkalis, greases and solvents.
  - c. The following list includes some of the more common occupations where Allergic and Irritant Contact Dermatitis can occur. It also includes some of the allergens and irritants that could cause dermatitis.

Occupation	Allergens	Irritants
Carpenters	Stains, glues, woods, turpentine, and varnishes	Detergents, thinners, solvents and wood preservatives.
Cleaners	Rubber gloves.	Detergents and solvents.

Occupation	Allergens	Irritants
Construction Workers	Chromates, cobalt, rubber and leather gloves, resins and woods.	Cement.
Florists & Gardeners	Plants, pesticides and rubber gloves.	Manure, artificial fertilizers and pesticides.
Mechanics	Rubber gloves, chromates, epoxy resin and antifreeze.	Oils, greases, gasoline, diesel fuel, cleaners and solvents.
Office Workers	Rubber, nickel and glue.	Solvents from photocopiers and adhesives.
Painters	Turpentine, thinners, cobalt, chromates, polyester resins, formaldehyde, epoxy resin, adhesives and paints.	Solvents, thinners, wallpaper adhesives and hand cleaners.

7. To produce damage, the irritant must penetrate the outer layer of the skin. Following penetration, the irritant comes into contact with cells and tissues and can react with certain chemicals that are naturally present in cells and tissues. These reactions produce skin damage.
8. Workers can have many types of reactions and the severity of the reaction depends on:
  - a. The intensity and duration of exposure or how often there is contact with the allergen/irritant.
  - b. The presence of any existing skin problems, rashes, cuts, scratches or scrapes.
  - c. If the temperature and humidity in the workplace causes sweating. Perspiration can dissolve chemical powder and enable the allergen to enter the body more quickly.
  - d. The part of the body exposed to the irritant. Injury is greater where the skin is thinner such as the face and upper back.