



## HEALTH INFORMATION

# Food Handlers and dermatitis

The HSE has advised that work-related dermatitis (often called eczema) is one of the main causes of ill-health for catering staff (chefs, cooks and catering assistants). The number of new cases per year is twice the average of all other industries.

## How to protect against Dermatitis

Use the **APC** approach:

### Avoid

direct contact between unprotected hands and cleaning products, water and food where this is sensible and practical. For instance:

- Use a dishwasher rather than washing up by hand.
- Use tools such as tongs to handle food rather than hands.
- Use a food processor for chopping or mixing.

### Protect

the skin. Avoiding contact will not always be possible so:

- Wear appropriate gloves where you can and particularly when carrying out all cleaning activities.

- Read the information on what types of gloves to wear will be supplied with the cleaning products.
- Where you wear gloves for handling food, remember your food safety training, so wash your hands before and after wearing gloves, avoid cross contamination, use single-use non-latex disposable gloves.
- Use soft, disposable paper towels for drying the skin.
- Also protect the skin by moisturising as often as possible and particularly at the end of the day – this replaces the natural oils that help keep the skin's protective barrier working properly.
- Use appropriate creams that will not contaminate food or cause cross-contamination, eg from a dispenser, hypoallergenic, and either non-tainting or free of fragrance and free of nut oil.

### Check

hands regularly for the first signs of dermatitis – itchy, dry or red skin:

- When dermatitis is spotted early, it can be treated, which can stop it from getting too bad.
- Checking for dermatitis can easily be included in your daily arrangements for food safety.