



Control approach 1



This guidance sheet is for employers **including** the self-employed and franchisees

to help them comply with the requirements of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) by controlling exposure to chemicals and protecting workers' health.

The sheet is part of HSE guidance *COSHH essentials: easy steps to control chemicals*. It describes the key points you need to follow to help reduce exposure to an adequate level. It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

The trade press and industry associations are good sources of information.

Plants contain sap and oils that commonly cause severe skin reactions and dermatitis (itching, rashes, blistering). Even wet work for long periods can cause skin disorders to develop.

Working with flowers, fruit and vegetables

General ventilation

SR26

Workplace and access

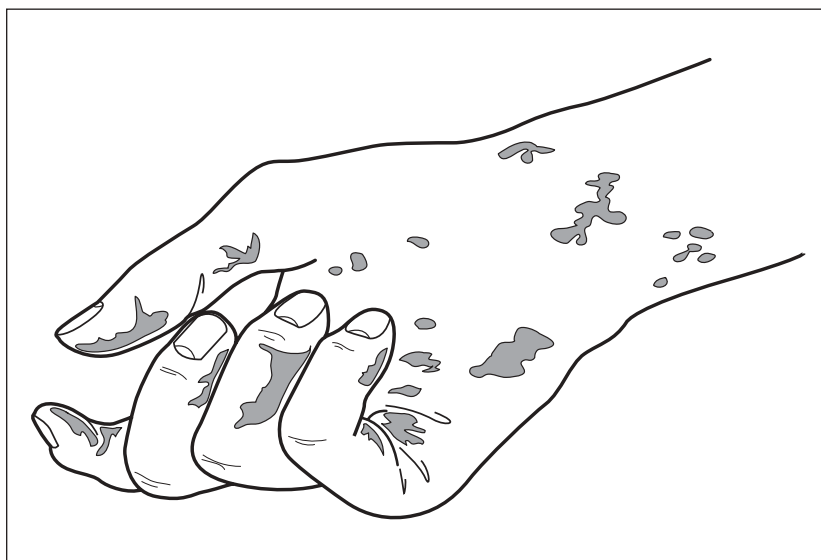
- Skin contact with plant sap etc is common in florists and greengrocers, but chefs, bar staff and garden centre staff may also be affected.
- Up to 50% of florists develop skin disorders.

Design and equipment

- ✓ You need washing facilities for decontamination after handling products.

Special care

- Some plant species are well known to cause skin disorders eg:
 - Decorative plants:
 - narcissus and tulips
 - chrysanthemums (compositae)
 - euphorbias (spurges)
 - primulas
 - pine (resins)
 - Fruit and vegetables:
 - celery
 - parsnips
 - pimentos and chillies
 - citrus fruit (particularly limes)
 - potatoes (with wet handling)
- Workers who are sensitised to latex in rubber gloves may also react to juice from fresh apples and pineapples.
- Fresh pineapples contain enzymes that make skin tender or sore.
- Bar staff may develop skin disorders (hands) through twisting zest into cocktails.



Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ✓ Wear protective gloves if possible. Single-use gloves are preferred. If you must use latex gloves, use only 'low-protein, powder-free' gloves.
- ✓ Throw away single-use gloves every time you take them off.
- ✓ Skin creams are important for skin protection and help in washing contamination from the skin. These are **not** 'barrier creams'. After work creams help to replace skin oils.

Health advice

- ✓ Ask your workers to check their skin for dryness or soreness every six months. If these effects appear, check the proper use of skin creams and PPE.
- ✓ If dermatitis (rashes, itching, skin cracking and peeling) appears seek medical advice. Tell the doctor that work could be a cause.

Training

- ✓ Show your workers this sheet and check that they understand it.

Further information

- *Assessing and managing risks at work from skin exposure to chemical agents: Guidance for employers and health and safety specialists* HSG205 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 1826 9
- *Preventing dermatitis at work: Advice for employers and employees* Leaflet INDG233 HSE Books 1996 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1246 5)
- Occupational health professionals: details of doctors and nurses can be found in the Yellow Pages under 'Health and safety consultants' and 'Health authorities and services'. Also visit the NHS website at www.nhsplus.nhs.uk

Employee checklist

- Wash your hands after use, and before and after eating, drinking, smoking and using the lavatory.
- Never clean your hands with concentrated cleaning products or solvents.
- Throw away single-use gloves every time you take them off.
- Check your skin regularly for dryness or soreness - tell your supervisor if these symptoms appear.
- Use skin creams provided as instructed.
- Watch out for skin itching, rashes or blistering - tell your doctor about your work.



*COSHH essentials:
easy steps to control chemicals*
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