

## **Skin Care Policy**

Most people in hairdressing, especially assistants, come into contact with mild chemicals such as shampoo, which although fairly harmless, may cause skin irritation when the skin is exposed for long periods. Other, much stronger chemicals such as colour and perm are potentially more dangerous and should always be treated with absolute care. Whatever the substance, we aim to keep the risk of harm to an absolute minimum and to help achieve this, we ask that everyone reads, follows and understands the skin care policy.

Dermatitis - the main threat

By following good practice, most problems can be prevented, however, without taking care, a condition which affects the hands can occur, this condition is known as dermatitis, or contact dermatitis; another word for dermatitis is eczema – pronounced 'xma'.

What is dermatitis?

Dermatitis is a disease that affects the lower layer of the skin, the part that is known as the dermis. Certain substances irritating the skin cause dermatitis. It can occur in most industries but the risk in hairdressing is high due to contact with shampoo in particular, this is because shampoo de-greases the skin taking away its natural protective oils. Dermatitis is not infectious and cannot be transmitted.

The symptoms of dermatitis

The main symptoms include: redness, itching, scaling, blistering and the skin often feels 'tight'. If allowed to get worse, the skin can crack and bleed and the problem can spread over the upper arms and body. However, if it is spotted early enough and adequate steps are taken, most people make a full recovery.

How can we prevent dermatitis?

Prevention is possible by taking care of your hands. The following points should help you to set up your own skin care regime.

Skin Care Policy

- Use a pure hand cream (not scented) on a regular basis (every night before going to bed, every morning when you get up, every lunch time, etc.) Ask a chemist for advice.
- Do not wear jewellery whilst at work (especially rings), dermatitis often starts when the skin under rings becomes damaged
- Dry your hands thoroughly every time they become wet (eg between shampoos, etc).
- Always wear gloves when handling, mixing, applying and shampooing off colour.
- Keep your hands out of soapy water whenever possible (eg wear washing up gloves when cleaning dishes at home)
- Wear warm gloves whenever you are out in cold weather
- Avoid any activity that may cause the hands to become rough

If symptoms do occur

If you take the necessary precautions your hands should stay trouble free, however if you do notice symptoms of dermatitis occurring, you must take immediate action:

- Inform your salon manager straight away
- Cease all direct contact with any chemical (use gloves if necessary)
- Seek advice from your doctor
- Follow all medical advice given with regard to treatment

Unfortunately, many doctors take a negative view of dermatitis and hairdressing, often telling the sufferer to simply give up their job. This is not usually necessary although it is sometimes the case. For very many hairdressers who suffer from dermatitis, once they are passed the shampooing stage in their career, the problem simply goes away.

Salon action

Ensure that a plentiful supply of barrier cream is available along with protective gloves. Encourage everyone to use the cream and make certain that gloves are used for all colour activity, especially for handling, mixing, applying and shampooing off colour.

If anyone has a possible skin problem, treat the concern seriously. Immediately stop all direct contact with any chemical and encourage the employee to seek medical advice. It is very important that the salon manager is informed of the situation and of the action you have taken.