

Contact dermatitis (CD)

Contact dermatitis occurs due to either an irritation or allergy but both may co-exist in a patient. In infants and children, irritant and allergic contact dermatitis affects similar places.

Irritant contact dermatitis

Irritant contact dermatitis occurs with sudden onset (within minutes) of redness and swelling after exposure to substances or stressful environment that damage the skin barrier. Patients with irritant contact dermatitis are predisposed to allergic contact dermatitis because of the impaired skin barrier that allows penetration of allergens. Irritant contact dermatitis is more common than allergic contact dermatitis. Many bathing foams, lotions or aqueous cream contain the substance known as **Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLS)** which irritates and dries out the skin.

Allergic contact dermatitis

Allergic CD is a delayed immune reaction occurring within hours to days after exposure to an allergen. Common allergen examples include metals such as nickel (e.g. belts, jewellery), components in rubber, perfumes and preservatives in cosmetics. Food industry workers are also predisposed to contact allergens.

Identifying the allergen from the history is difficult and patients often need patch testing.

Management is avoidance of the allergen and topical steroids.

Book your appointment with Dr Mabelane to help identify your trigger.