

Contact Dermatitis

What is contact dermatitis?

Contact dermatitis is an allergic reaction rash on your child's skin.

Most often it is from something (irritant) that touches the skin. Causes may include:

- Poison ivy.
- Soaps or detergents.
- Adhesives like the kind in Band-Aids® or adhesive tape.
- Make-up or cosmetics.
- Nickel. This metal is often found in jewelry.
- Antibiotic creams or ointments put on the skin.

How is it diagnosed?

The rash is red, bumpy and itchy. Sometimes, there are blisters or crusty areas on the skin.

The rash will only be in the area that has been in contact with the irritant.

How is it treated?

The best way to cure the rash is to keep your child away from the irritant.

Sometimes the rash may need to be treated with a cream or ointment ordered by your child's doctor.

How can I keep it from coming back?

Keep your child from coming in contact with the things that caused it.

Several ways to prevent contact may be:

- **Nickel.** Cover snaps and rivets on your child's clothing with a patch. If metal is exposed to the skin, paint the surface with clear nail polish. Jewelry should be "nickel free".
- **Poison ivy, poison oak or poison sumac.** Wash clothes that touched the plants. Wash your child's skin with gentle soap and water. Learn to identify these plants to prevent future exposure.
- **Topical antibiotics.** Neomycin is a common cause of irritation. It is found in some antibiotic ointments or creams. Check the contents of any ointments or creams before putting on your child's skin.



ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- A rash or redness that is still spreading after 48 hours of treatment.
- A temperature of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher.
- A rash that has not completely healed in one week.
- Itching that won't stop.
- Signs of infection: the rash gets redder, warm, swollen, and tender or has pus on it.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.