

Expert Perspective when Diagnosing and Managing Sensitive Skin



This questionnaire was developed to help screen patients for sensitive skin. One of the most common complaints from patients is how to manage skin sensitivity and rashes. When counseling patients, it's important to discuss 'management' and not just 'treatment', as sensitive skin conditions can be chronic and require long-term support.¹

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IDENTIFYING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SENSITIVE SKIN

What do sensitive skin, allergic or irritant skin rashes look like? When the patient presents with skin issues, use this diagnostic criteria to evaluate their condition.

SENSITIVE SKIN SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS TO CHECK FOR INCLUDE:²

- Red skin with or without swelling.
- Skin that stings or burns.
- Rashes or hives.
- Dry skin that may peel, crack, blister or bleed.
- Patches of skin that feel dry, hard and leathery.

Clinical Recommendations:

- Asking questions about the patient's workplace, outside environment, and home will help find factors that could be triggering their skin condition.
- It's important to be a detective to uncover potential triggers that may not be obvious to the patient.
 - In the case of a contact dermatitis, a skin rash may develop in the area where the environmental exposure or personal care product comes in contact with the skin.
 - A rash on the hands may be the result of wearing gloves or using a sanitizing agent on the hands.
 - One of the most overlooked but most common causes of skin reactions is exposure to textiles like clothing, towels, or bed sheets. The use of detergents, fabric conditioners, or dryer sheets that contain fragrances or dyes may lead to widespread sensitivity and rashes.
- Once potential triggering factors have been identified, they should be eliminated from the patient's environment as much as possible. If there are multiple possible triggers, it may be advisable to eliminate all of them and slowly re-introduce one at a time. In doing so, it may be possible to isolate the individual trigger.
- Recommend fragrance-free skincare products to people with sensitive skin or rashes. Harsh actives like retinol, exfoliating acids, or skin scrubs should be avoided.

IDENTIFYING UNDERLYING CAUSES OF SENSITIVE SKIN

Once a diagnosis has been established there are three key areas to explore when attempting to identify the trigger.

1. Occupational triggers:

- ✓ What type of work does the patient do?
- ✓ Are there any occupational exposures that could trigger a skin rash (ie wearing gloves, chemicals or cleaning solutions, dyes/ fragrances, extremes in temperature/ water)?

2. Environmental triggers:

- ✓ Does the patient spend a lot of time outdoors (ie work in a garden or the woods)?
- ✓ Does the patient wear sunscreen regularly?
 - If so, do they use mineral or chemical sunscreens?
- ✓ Does the patient have seasonal allergies?

3. Home and personal care triggers:

Home triggers:

- ✓ Does the patient swim in a pool or use a hot tub?
- ✓ Are there pets in the home?
- ✓ Is the patient cleaning the home with chemicals or disinfectants?
- ✓ Is the patient doing the laundry or sending it out?
 - Is a fragrance-free, dye-free detergent, fabric conditioner, and dryer sheet being used?

Personal care triggers:

- ✓ Is the patient using skincare or haircare products with fragrances? If so, which products?
- ✓ Is the patient using skincare products with potentially harsh actives like retinol or glycolic acid?
- ✓ How often is the patient showering or bathing? How long?
- ✓ Are there additives used in the bath? Any scrubs or exfoliating products being used?