

Skin Care for Health Care Workers During COVID-19

Wearing protective equipment for prolonged periods can damage the skin. Health care professionals have reported damage to the nose, hands, cheeks, and forehead during the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone should take care of their skin when using protective equipment. Here are some tips to help!



Dryness Due to Handwashing

Handwashing is vital in preventing the spread of COVID-19, but frequent handwashing can lead to dry skin. Dry skin may crack, compromising the skin barrier and increasing infection risk.

PREVENTING DRY HANDS

1. Use gentle **unscented soap** to wash.
2. Use a **fragrance-free moisturizer** after handwashing.
3. Moisturize while your hands are still **slightly damp**.
4. For very dry skin, look for **ointments with petroleum** (CeraVe Healing Ointment, Vaseline, Aquaphor).
5. Use **lukewarm water** instead of hot water.



Skin Damage from N95 Masks

N95 masks are critical for health care workers, however the pressure of the mask pressing on the skin can cause tissue damage due to requirements for a tight fit. Wearing a mask can also cause acne breakouts.

PROTECTING FACIAL SKIN

1. Wash your face with a **gentle face wash** before and after wearing a mask.
2. Apply a **non-comedogenic face moisturizer** after washing. Do not use any products that would inhibit a good seal of the mask.
3. Use **mineral oil or petroleum-based ointments** after you are done wearing the mask for the day, to heal irritated skin. **Do not apply this under the mask.**
4. If possible, remove the mask for **at least 5 minutes** every few hours.
5. If irritation persists, consider applying **liquid skin sealants** prior to use. Allow to dry and **avoid petroleum.**



Skin Rashes and Irritation

Both irritant and allergic contact dermatitis may result from increased exposure to soaps, rubber in gloves and equipment, elastic bands in masks, and other irritants and allergens. This can present as red, dry, scaly, and itchy skin.

PREVENTING RASHES AND IRRITATION

1. Try to avoid what may be causing your rash. If symptoms persist, **patch testing** can help to identify skin allergens.
2. Moisturizer and **topical corticosteroids** can help relieve mild symptoms.
3. **Oral antihistamines** may help with itchy skin.
4. If you are having a severe reaction, your dermatologist may **prescribe prednisone.**

For more information about COVID-19, visit the CDC's website at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

For help with persistently dry skin, see a board-certified dermatologist.

Find one in your area at [aad.org/findaderm](https://www.aad.org/findaderm).