



Occupational skin diseases from cement and their prevention?

INTRODUCTION

Occupational skin diseases (OSD) are skin problems caused by work or made worse by the work environment. For example, OSD can be triggered by contact with or exposure to cement and others, such as wood dust, wood preservatives, fibreglass, solvents, oils and epoxy resins. Certain persons may be sensitive to rubber or leather and using personal protective equipment (PPE) made from such materials could also trigger OSD.

Cement and cement containing substances such as cement powder, mortar and concrete can irritate and damage the skin as it is abrasive and alkaline. They may also cause an allergic skin reaction. Workers may experience symptoms such as rashes, itch or dry skin on their hands, forearms, legs and sometimes the back when they come into contact with cement.

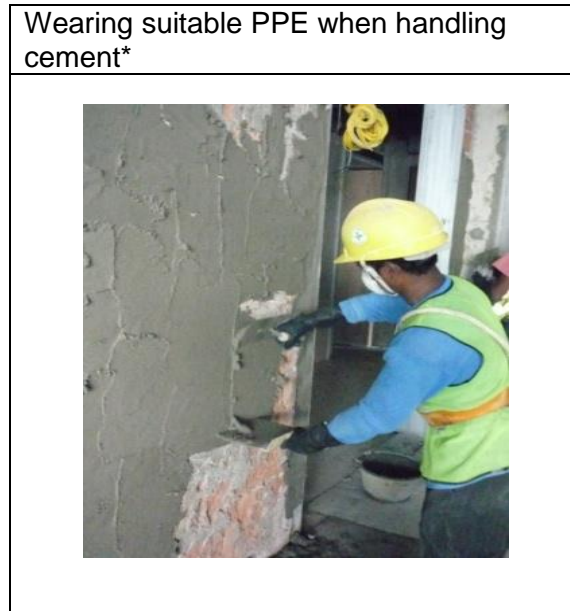
	
Skin peeling and flaking as seen in dermatitis*	Skin redness with blistering as seen in dermatitis*

Prevention

Workers should be educated on the health effects of exposure to cement, safe work practices and use of appropriate personal protective equipment such as:

- Impervious gloves (can be used with thin cotton inner liner)
- Overalls with long sleeves and full-length trousers
- Waterproof boots

Clothing should be worn so as to avoid "traps" for fresh mortar or concrete to fall in i.e. with sleeves over the gloves and trouser legs over the boots - not tucked inside. If "trapping" does happen, steps should be taken to quickly clean the contaminated skin and protective clothing.



See your doctor

Employers should advise their workers with skin symptoms which may be related to their work, to seek treatment early. Advice may include the use of personal protective equipment or removal from exposure if the person is allergic to the chemical.

Reporting of Occupational Skin Disease

Employer should also notify cases of OSD via Incident Reporting (iReport) <https://iosh.mom.gov.sg/iosh/ir/notificationsubmission/selectNotificationTypeInternetSubmission.do>

**Photos courtesy of National Skin Centre (S) Pte Ltd*