



Hey! Your Epidermis is Showing!

Getting to Know Your Skin

The largest organ of the body is the skin, it averages nearly 3,000 square inches in size! Due to its size, it's not surprising that skin problems account for a large number of job-related disease. Knowing the structure of your skin and what kinds of chemicals can damage it will help you understand how skin disease happens and how you can prevent it.

How Skin Protects

You skin has 3 layers: the epidermis, dermis and the subcutaneous layer. The layer on the outside is called the epidermis. It serves as armor for the sensitive, living tissue underneath. It can take a fair amount of abuse, but when it becomes dry and cracked, irritants can easily pass through. Plus, it has holes for hair shafts and sweat ducts that can't keep out irritants. The second and third layers are the dermis and subcutaneous layer. Both contain nerves, blood vessels, and glands to produce sweat and lubricating oils that protect the surface.

They also act as a temperature regulating device for your whole body.



Inside this Issue:

Safety Focus: Medication at Work	2
Your SafetyTeam	3
Question of the Month	4

Shared Successes

The following are interesting progress notes from SafetyTeam members' activities:

- A SafetyTeam member noted concern that the pedestrian crosswalks adjacent to the Physicians Pavilion and Shriners' Hospital were hazardous due to their location and lack of visibility during certain times of day. EHRS surveyed the area of concern and did not note any special hazards other than high traffic levels. When crossing busy roads, please continue to be careful and make sure that motorists see YOU!

Please continue to submit your monthly member update forms so that your safety concerns continue to be addressed. Please also report any successes you have as well! Don't forget to answer the Question of the Month, where correct answers will earn you valuable SafetyPoints!

Thanks members... be safe!



Safety Focus

This month's specialized training topic is titled, **"Medication at Work"**. This topic is presented to remind employees to use medications responsibly.



Read... learn!

With so much focus these days on the fight against illegal drugs, you might not realize that when it comes to job-related injuries and deaths, illegal drugs are not the only problem. **Using prescription and over-the-counter medications can be hazardous.**

While illegal drugs are a hazard, the medicines we receive from doctors and pharmacies are so easily obtained - and so easily misused - that they contribute to more deaths and injuries on the job than the higher-profile illegal drugs.

You should always read the warnings and instructions provided with any medication you are taking. This can be on labels or package inserts, but if you still have questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist!

You need to know how much to take and what the possible side effects may be. These may include dizziness or drowsiness.

Using medication at work

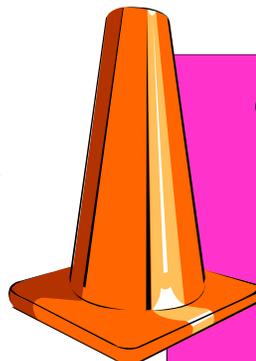


If you are taking medication, things to consider include:

- If you are taking the medicine for a painful condition, your condition or the medication may limit your mobility and/or delay your responses.
- If you have a fever, you should not operate or use hazardous machinery.
- If you are having trouble sleeping, you are more likely to end up fatigued at work. Sleep medication and stimulants (including coffee) can mask symptoms of fatigue.
- Many people are sensitive to the amount of antihistamine in cold pills. Side effects include lowered alertness and slowed responses. If you exceed the maximum recommended dose, of course, the effects will be worse.
- The hazardous effects of antihistamines, tranquilizers, mild sedatives and pain relievers are greatly magnified when combined with alcohol.
- Side effects of medications may be worse when taken to relieve a physically stressful illness like the flu.
- Avoid medication if you have to drive vehicles or use power tools, unless approved by your doctor. Be sure that your doctor knows what you do at work.
- Don't refill prescriptions without checking with your doctor, and never take someone else's prescription medication.

Remember!

It is better to miss work, or handle other duties, for the day than to risk injury to yourself or a co-worker!



Questions about how to manage medications at work?

Ask your doctor or contact Employee Health

503 494-5271

(Skin - continued from page 1)

The dermis also produces new skin cells. Your skin is completely replaced about every 30 days. When the epidermis becomes damaged, irritants can penetrate to the deeper layers. When irritation occurs, the skin tries to protect itself by building up a thicker epidermis. This thick layer is more likely to crack, leading to further damage and exposing your body's systems to contamination.

Causes of Skin Problems

The most common causes of workplace skin diseases are chemical irritants such as solvents, acids or caustics.

Solvents dissolve your skin's protective, oily coating, allowing the surface to dry and crack. This is why it is unwise to clean your hands with solvents. Some solvents can pass through your skin into your body and cause damage to internal organs including the liver and kidneys.



Acids react with your skin, chemically burning it away. Some acids, such as hydrofluoric acid, do not produce pain until they have already penetrated deep into the skin and bone.

Bases, or caustics, such as ammonia and sodium hydroxide, also produce a chemical burn, destroying whatever they come into contact with.

Metal compounds and many other chemicals can produce allergic reactions causing allergic dermatitis.

Before using a chemical, always read the material safety data sheet (MSDS) to find out if they are hazardous and what precautions you should take. Take action to keep hazardous chemicals from getting "under your skin."

Q of M Answer!

Last month's Question of the Month was from the Focus Topic, "Safe Winter Driving."

The question was, "**List three things you can do to reduce your chance of slip, trip and fall at work?**"

There are many possible answers, but a few that should be high on your list are:

- **Slow Down: Make an effort to leave yourself enough time to get where you're going, and take the safe route!**
- **Pay Attention: Look around you and watch where you are walking. Walk around obstacles and if you can, fix or report hazardous conditions.**
- **Wear Good Shoes: Wear shoes with good traction and stability.**

Thank you to everyone who participated! If you answered correctly, you earned 1 SafetyPoint! Contact Kristine Abrahamson at 503 494-0215 for answers to your questions.

Injured on the Job?

The OHSU **Risk Management Department** is here to help you through the healing process and.....



GET YOU BACK TO WORK!

If you have any questions, please reference their new website:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/risk/>

Click on the Workers Compensation Tab



Slow down in Construction Work Zones!

SAFETYNEWS

4

February 2006

Question of the Month

The question of the Month is designed to challenge your safety knowledge and give you a chance to earn some cool, free stuff!



QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What are some common side effects of medication that can impair you at work?

Write your answer to the question in the appropriate box on your SafetyTeam Member Update form. Correct answers to this month's Question will earn 1 SafetyPoint.

If you are not currently a SafetyTeam member and would like to participate, contact Kristine Abrahamson, SafetyTeam Coordinator at 503 494-7795.

OHSU

OHSU includes four schools; two hospitals; numerous primary care and specialty clinics; multiple research institutes; and several public service and outreach units. OHSU is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution.

The SafetyNews newsletter is a publication of the OHSU SafetyTeam, and is a joint effort of AFSCME and OHSU. ©2006

Oregon Health & Science University
3181 S.W. Sam Jackson Park Road, PP 170
Portland, OR 97239

503 494-7795
safeteam@ohsu.edu