

Keep your English up to scratch!...

Jean-Pierre Charpy
Philip Bastable
Didier Carnet

Medical English Department, Dijon
School of Medicine
didier.carnet@u-bourgogne.fr

Dear readers,

Are you ready to brush up your dermatological English? It is our very great pleasure to present the twentieth English corner based on **contact dermatitis**. Don't forget you can use a dictionary to help you with the text, and of course, you should visit our website at <http://anglaimedical.u-bourgogne.fr/> to work on your pronunciation or build your medical vocabulary. The site also includes a talking dictionary, medical videos, exercises, clinical cases, words and expressions for specialists...

Contact dermatitis

Contact dermatitis, as the name implies¹, is inflammation of the skin, or a rash, caused by contact with a specific substance. There are two types:

The first, irritant contact dermatitis, is caused by primary irritants. These are substances, such as detergents, latex, bleach² or kerosene, which can trigger³ a reaction on the first contact; the immune system is not involved. This type of dermatitis tends to be painful rather than itchy⁴.

The second, allergic contact dermatitis, occurs when a person has developed sensitivity⁵ to a particular substance over time⁶. Common causes of this second type include cosmetics, fragrances⁷ in soap⁸ or shampoos and the nickel present in jewellery⁹ and belt¹⁰ buckles¹¹. Certain plants, such as ragweed¹² or poison ivy¹³, can also cause these reactions.

The rash occurs because the body's defence system reacts to the substance as if it were an invader and releases¹⁴

antibodies and histamine. This inappropriate reaction can cause water or pus-filled blisters¹⁵, flaky¹⁶ skin, which may develop into raw patches¹⁷, general redness, swelling¹⁸, red wheals¹⁹ and persistent itching.

The site of the reaction often indicates the cause. For example, a rash on the wrist²⁰ may be due to nickel in the buckle of a watch strap²¹. People who handle²² chemicals at work may suffer from contact dermatitis affecting the hands.

Patch testing is useful to determine what substances are triggering the reaction. In these tests, drops²³ of diluted potential irritants are placed on strips²⁴, which are then stuck²⁵ to the skin. After 48 hours, the strips are removed²⁶ and the skin underneath²⁷ is examined for signs of an immune reaction.

The treatment consists of protection, by wearing gloves²⁸ or using a barrier cream, and avoidance²⁹: avoid using strongly perfumed soaps, for example.

In severe cases, topical corticosteroids and antihistamines can relieve the itching and inflammation, but even then, the symptoms may take several weeks to clear up³⁰.

1. suggests (= *laisse entendre*)
2. sodium hypochlorite (= *eau de javel*)
3. cause (= *déclencher*)
4. irritating (= *irritant, qui démange*)
5. reaction to stimuli (= *sensibilité*)
6. with time (= *avec le temps*)
7. perfumes (= *parfums, senteurs*)
8. product for washing (= *savon*)
9. necklaces, bracelets etc. (= *bijoux*)
10. strap to hold trousers up (= *ceinture*)
11. metal fastener (= *boucle*)
12. weed of the genus *Ambrosia* (= *ambrosie*)
13. climbing plant of the genus *Toxicodendron* (= *sumac vénéneux*)

14. produces (= *libère*)
15. fluid-filled vesicles (= *cloques*)
16. squamous (= *squameux*)
17. areas without skin (= *lésions à vif*)
18. oedema (= *gonflement*)
19. raised marks (= *papules*)
20. joint between hand and forearm (= *poignet*)
21. bracelet for a watch (= *bracelet de montre*)
22. manipulate (= *manipuler*)
23. small amount of liquid (= *goutte*)
24. band of material (= *bande adhésive*)
25. fixed (= *collé*)
26. taken off (= *retiré*)
27. below (= *en-dessous*)
28. clothing to protect hands (= *gants*)
29. non-use (= *évitement*)
30. resolve (= *se dissiper*)

Exercise 1: This text contains several examples of compound nouns.

Example: a strap for a watch is a watch strap, a buckle to close a belt is a belt buckle.

What compound nouns are used to describe the following?

1. a paste for cleaning your teeth
2. a cream for your hands
3. drops for the eyes
4. the system that defends the body
5. a cap for protecting a needle
6. varnish for the fingernails
7. a rash caused by damp nappies
8. a device to trim the nails

1. toothpaste
2. hand cream
3. eye drops
4. defence system
5. needle cap
6. nail varnish
7. nappy rash
8. nail trimmer

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Exercise 2: The text also contains one example of a compound adjective.

Example: blisters that are full of pus are pus-filled blisters.

What compound adjectives describe the following?

1. a technique that uses a vacuum to close a wound
2. treatment that takes a lot of time to administer

3. a drug that acts over a long time
4. a treatment that modifies the course of a disease
5. a response that depends on the size of the dose
6. a papule the size of a pea
7. an incision that is four inches long
8. a biopsy of the full thickness of the skin

1. vacuum-assisted closure
2. time-consuming treatment
3. long-acting drug
4. disease-modifying treatment
5. dose-dependent response
6. pea-sized papule
7. four-inch-long incision
8. full-thickness skin biopsy