

# Toolbox

## Safety Series



### **HAND INJURIES – PART 4 – CHEMICALS**

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One way chemicals can enter our bodies is through absorption through the skin. More often than not, this occurs through the hands as we handle various chemicals. It's important to read the label and to know the chemicals you are working with and to utilize protective gloves when handling chemicals.

Chemicals can cause irritations to your skin. Most of the time this isn't acute and doesn't occur with just one unprotected handling of the chemical, but it's with repeated unprotected handling of the chemical. Detergents and solvents can dry out your skin and dissolve the oils in your hands. Your hands may develop a rash that is further irritated as you use your hands to work on various tasks. Continued abrasion of the tender skin can cause you further irritation and discomfort.

Also some chemicals such as caustic Sodium Hydroxide can cause a burn to your hands. Very acid or caustic chemicals can immediately burn your skin from contact.

It's important you protect your skin with gloves. More importantly, the right glove for the chemicals you are handling. Not all gloves are made the same. Neoprene gloves work great for many workplace chemicals such as solvents and detergents. However they are not effective for some chemicals such as Benzene. Latex gloves don't work well with many solvents. Cut-resistant gloves work well on sharp objects, but won't do a thing against chemicals.

Even after using gloves, you should wash your hands after handling chemicals and especially before you eat, drink or smoke. Protect your hands from irritation and burns, utilize gloves whenever handling chemicals.

In Part 5 we will discuss awareness and placement of your hands to prevent injuries.

