



Potassium Dichromate (Chromium)

What are the aims of this patient information leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about your contact allergy. It tells you what a contact allergy is, what causes this allergy and what you can do about it.

What is contact allergy?

Dermatitis, also known as eczema, describes a type of inflammation of the skin. Contact dermatitis or contact eczema is a term used when this inflammation is caused by direct or indirect skin contact with something in your environment. Allergic contact dermatitis occurs when your immune system causes allergy to a very specific chemical or substance that has been in contact with the skin.

What is potassium dichromate?

Potassium dichromate is a compound of chromium which is a metal. This can also be found in non-metal products.

What are some products that contain potassium dichromate (chromium)?

- Tanned leather in shoes, gloves, jackets, belts, watch straps, leather steering wheel and gearstick covers and furniture etc. Many leathers are chromate-tanned but leathers that are vegetable-tanned will be fine to wear. Wet/damp leather may cause more problems.
- Cement. European legislation now limits the amount of problematic chromate (chromium VI) in cement, but please be aware cement may still cause problems in people with chromate allergy.
- Cosmetics including some eyeshadows, eyeliner, mascaras, concealers, foundations and powder (CI 77288 Chromium Oxide Green and CI 77289 Chromium Hydroxide Green CI 77289).
- Chromium plated metals (may be called chrome) including mobile phones, screws, fittings, construction materials, sheet metal and musical instrument strings.
- Joint replacement prostheses e.g. for hip and knee, and other medical devices and products may contain chrome; not all individuals with chromate allergy have problems with these. Please inform and discuss with your surgeon.
- Dental prostheses such as metal plates, prosthetics, bridges and posts, may contain chrome alloys. Please inform and discuss with your dental practitioner.

Other less common sources of exposure to chromium include:

- Tattoo inks and artists' paints (especially some green and blue pigments)
- Chromic suture material (catgut, rarely used)
- Primer paints and wood preservatives, glues and stains
- Textiles especially in military green colours, including snooker and pool table felt
- Welding (e.g. welding fumes), electroplating and anti-rust coatings
- Boiler linings, radiator coolant and foundry sand
- Glass polishes and cleaning agents, glass stains and pottery glazes and lacquers
- Matches
- Magnetic tapes and pressing vinyl records
- Printing inks and photocopying inks
- Vitamin supplements containing chromium

Remember, always check the label, these lists can never be complete and ingredients change.

How can I manage my allergy?

This means that you should avoid putting products containing potassium dichromate (chromium) onto your skin in the future.

If you take steps to avoid chromium it is likely that your skin will improve. However, in some cases the dermatitis can remain. The reason why this occurs is uncertain, but it is more likely if your dermatitis is severe and chronic.

Self-care (what can I do?)

Always check the ingredient listing on the product, package or package insert as these lists can never be complete and ingredients change. This is particularly important for any products purchased outside the EU where some allergens may not be banned.

Updated BSCA: 2025