

Mayo Clinic Minute

Allergy or irritant? The truth about your rash

Video	Audio
Vivien Williams	Hand-washing is essential for preventing the spread of germs. But, sometimes, all this scrubbing can cause a rash. Does this mean you're allergic to the soap?
Dawn Davis, M.D. Dermatology Mayo Clinic	"One important thing to differentiate from allergic contact dermatitis is irritant contact dermatitis."
Vivien Williams	Dr. Dawn Davis says allergic dermatitis means a substance is causing an allergic reaction on your skin. But irritant contact dermatitis means your skin is inflamed from repeated exposure to something.
Dawn Davis, M.D.	"For example, if I used lye soap on my skin, and I used it over and over again, I would develop an irritant contact dermatitis simply from eroding away the natural barrier of my skin with repetitive washing."
Vivien Williams	Dr. Davis says it's not always easy to tell the difference between an allergy or irritant.
Dawn Davis, M.D.	"So it's very helpful to go to a health provider, especially a dermatologist or allergist, to help differentiate between irritant contact dermatitis and an allergy."
Vivien Williams	That way you can properly treat the rash and prevent it from happening again.
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Vivien Williams.