

The Cycle of Skin Damage

How the Overuse of Soap and Water May Damage Skin¹

OVEREXPOSURE to Hand Washing with SOAP AND WATER

Oils and lipids naturally present in the skin
dissolve disrupting the natural barrier.

SKIN DAMAGE *starts*

Dry, flaky skin
occurs over time
which can
advance to
redness and
irritation.

SKIN DAMAGE *progresses*

Continued
overexposure to
soap and water
worsens skin
damage and
makes it
extremely
difficult to
return to ABHR.

Cumulative Irritant Contact Dermatitis *develops*

Disruption in the skin's
natural barrier creates
channels of exposure to
nerves and tissues in the
deeper layers of skin.

Stinging sensation drives healthcare workers to return to SOAP AND WATER USE

Limited physical discomfort with
handwashing drives healthcare
workers to continued overuse of
soap and water; the source of
the problem.

Alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)

Immediate stinging sensation when
ABHR is applied is a sign of skin
damage that has already occurred.

