



CAUSES OF SKIN RASH RELATED TO WATER USE



On November 20, 2021, JP-5 fuel was released to the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) drinking water system. The Red Hill Shaft and Aiea-Halawa Shaft were taken offline November 28 and December 3, respectively, in conjunction with a Health Advisory issued by the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) on November 29. The Interagency Drinking Water System Team (IDWST)— composed of experts from the Department of Defense, DOH, and the Environmental Protection Agency—created a flushing plan to clean/restore the drinking water system. Samples were taken to verify water in the drinking water system was safe for consumption, and the DOH amended the Health Advisory for all parts of the drinking water system by March 2022 to allow full use of the water.

COMMON TYPES OF SKIN RASHES

Urticaria - Allergic Reaction (Hives)

A rash that is caused by contact with something you are allergic to

Dermatitis - Skin Irritation

Skin irritation that is caused by contact (contact dermatitis) with an irritant

STRESS

Stress plays a big part in your health. When you go through a traumatic event, your body can have higher levels of stress than normal, which can affect your health.

High stress can cause or worsen skin conditions. You can develop a "stress rash" which, while usually short-term, can last a long time.

Stress weakens your immune system, so you may react to environmental triggers that you could normally fight off.



Common Water Contaminants that Cause Skin Rashes

Since the November 20 release, some residents have expressed concern about symptoms related to exposure to contaminated water. Included in these symptoms are skin rashes. Skin rashes can be caused by a number of factors, including:

Chlorine Used in drinking water for disinfection; it can remove good bacteria from your skin and strip oils, leading to dry skin

Petroleum JP-5 fuel is a petroleum contaminant; petroleum exposure can cause short-term inflammation

Bacteria Typically associated with coming into contact with outdoor water, bacteria can cause skin infections (small bumps that get larger over time)

Hard Water High amounts of calcium and magnesium in water can cause dry skin and redness and make other skin conditions worse.

Pesticides If pesticides from farm runoff enter drinking water, they can cause skin irritation or trigger allergic reactions

pH Typically "soft" water has low pH; if the pH is too high or too low, it can cause rashes and dry skin

Arsenic Naturally occurs in water; high amounts of arsenic consumption over a long period of time can cause skin lesions

Water hardness, pH, bacteria, and other chemicals are regularly tested for by the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command. Petroleum products, arsenic, and chlorine are among the chemicals tested for as part of the JBPHH drinking water system long-term monitoring plan. Levels are well below the safety standards developed by the IDWST.



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You SHOULD



...keep the rash clean, and wash with a gentle cleanser

...apply anti-itch cream or ointment to the rash (1% hydrocortisone)

...try antihistamines if itching prevents a good night's sleep

...consider colloidal oatmeal products for bathing and as a moisturizer

...wear breathable or loose-fitting clothing

You should AVOID



...scratching your rash. Scratching can make the rash more severe and lead to infection

...using hot water to wash your rash, which can dry out your skin

...using hydrogen peroxide, rubbing alcohol, or bleach, which will further dry and irritate your skin

...using light lotions, which don't provide a lot of moisture compared to creams and ointments

...using perfumed or scented products (e.g., soaps, detergents, fabric softeners, etc)

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A RASH?

Getting a rash can be concerning, especially if you don't know what is causing it. See your doctor if you have a rash. If needed, they can refer you to a specialist. Be sure to discuss with your doctor your bathing and showering habits, and make note of any change in your tap water (e.g., a new sheen or odor, or it feels different) or in your daily routine, including showering/bathing, new products (e.g., lotions, laundry detergents), or eating habits.

WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME IF I HAVE A RASH?

Taking care of a rash can help prevent it from getting worse or becoming infected. To the left is a list of things that you should do and things you should avoid doing to care for your rash until you can seek medical care. Always follow your doctor's recommendations.

If you or a loved one is experiencing a rash that is not resolved with at-home care, please seek medical attention.

Make an appointment with your primary care physician

Call the health screening appointment line at (888) 683-2778

Contact the Nurse Advice Line at (800) 874-2273 (800-TRICARE)

If your rash is severe, go to Tripler Army Medical Center or call 911