

Am I Allergic to My Clothes?

If a wool sweater makes you [itch](#), or if polyester pants give you a rash, you may have what's called textile or clothing [dermatitis](#). It's a form of contact dermatitis. Your skin is reacting to the fibers in your clothes, or to the dyes, resins, and other chemicals used to treat what you wear.

What Causes It?

Since clothing is in close contact with your [skin](#) most of the day, it's no surprise that your shirts, pants, and undies can [cause skin problems](#).

Any kind of fiber can bring on a rash, but you're more likely to get textile dermatitis from clothes made with synthetics such as polyester, rayon, nylon, spandex, or rubber. They don't breathe as well as natural fibers, and they make you sweat more.

Often the source is the dye or other chemicals in the clothing. Formaldehyde resins used to make garments wrinkle-free or dirt-repellent can cause problems. So can dyes, glues, and chemicals used to tan, or create, leather. If you're allergic to nickel, you might get a red, itchy reaction where your blue jeans button touches your skin. It has its own name: nickel [dermatitis](#). Jewelry with nickel can cause it, too.

The combination of tight-fitting fabric and sweat can irritate your skin as it rubs against you. Doctors call this less common condition irritant dermatitis. It may look a lot like textile dermatitis, but the cause is different.

What Are the Symptoms?

Look for redness, scaly skin, or itchy areas. Sometimes they pop up within hours after you put on your clothes, or they may take days or

weeks to appear. Some people can wear the same item for years before a **rash** breaks out.

Symptoms often begin in the folds of your skin or other areas that make contact with your clothes and what's in them. That includes:

- The crooks of your arms
- Behind your knees
- Armpits
- The groin
- Any place where your clothing is tight

Who Gets It?

Women are more likely to have it because they more often wear tight-fitting clothes. So are **obese** people when they overheat and sweat. People with atopic dermatitis, a skin disease that affects mostly children, are also more likely to get textile dermatitis.

Where you work also matters. People with jobs in hot and humid places, like a bakery, have greater odds of dermatitis. If you wear latex gloves on the job, your hands may get irritated (which would be irritant dermatitis) or you may become allergic to the latex itself. That's allergic contact dermatitis.