

# Understanding Ichthyosis in the Workplace

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**Ichthyosis** is a group of skin conditions that cause dry, thick, scaly skin. Symptoms vary widely, but may include:

- Dry, cracked skin that can be painful
- Flaking and visible scaling
- Itching and discomfort
- Sensitivity to temperature changes
- Risk of overheating
- Increased susceptibility to skin infections
- Difficulty with prolonged physical activity due to friction or cracking
- Impact on hands/feet that may affect dexterity or walking

**Ichthyosis is lifelong and not contagious.** With awareness and simple accommodations, employees can succeed across all professions.

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## Why Education Matters for Employers

Many individuals with ichthyosis are fully capable of performing their job duties. However, symptoms may occasionally affect:

- Comfort in certain environments (heat, cold, dry air)
- Manual tasks if skin cracks or blisters
- Time needed for medical skin-care routines
- Attendance due to flare-ups or treatment needs

Employers who understand the condition can reduce barriers and create an inclusive, supportive workplace.

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## How Ichthyosis May Affect Job Duties

| Potential Challenge        | How It Shows Up at Work                                  | Example Jobs Affected              |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Dry, cracked, painful skin | Reduced mobility or dexterity, difficulty gripping tools | Manual labor, typing-heavy jobs    |
| Sensitivity to heat        | Fatigue or overheating in warm/active environments       | Outdoor work, kitchens, warehouses |

| Potential Challenge      | How It Shows Up at Work             | Example Jobs Affected |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Frequent skin-care needs | May need lotion breaks or hydration | Any workplace         |
| Visible flaking          | Self-consciousness or social stigma | Public-facing roles   |
| Infections or flare-ups  | Occasional medical appointments     | Any workplace         |

⚠ These impacts vary greatly. Many people have mild symptoms and need few accommodations.

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## Reasonable Workplace Accommodations

Under the ADA (US) and similar protections in many countries, accommodations are often simple and cost-free:

### Environmental

- Access to climate-controlled workspace
- Ability to use personal fan or cooling device
- Adjusting heating/air flow near desk

### Personal-Care Needs

- Flexible scheduling for skin-care routines or medical appointments
- Short breaks to apply moisturizer or hydrate

### Comfort & Safety

- Soft gloves or friction-reducing materials
- Job-task rotation to avoid prolonged repetitive motions
- Protective footwear or cushioned options if feet are affected

### Other Support

- Work-from-home options during severe flares
- Understanding/awareness to minimize stigma

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## Tips for Employers

- Ask “How can we support you?” rather than assuming needs
- Maintain privacy and respect confidentiality
- Avoid commenting on skin appearance unless employee raises it
- Provide inclusive culture training for HR/managers
- Remember: performance should be judged on skills, not skin

This Adult Toolkit Resource brought to you by:



*This information is provided as a service to patients and parents of patients who have ichthyosis. It is not intended to supplement appropriate medical care, but instead to complement that care with guidance in practical issues facing patients and parents. Neither FIRST, its Board of Directors, Medical & Scientific Advisory Board, Board of Medical Editors, nor Foundation staff and officials endorse any treatments or products reported here. All issues pertaining to the care of patients with ichthyosis should be discussed with a dermatologist experienced in the treatment of their skin disorder.*



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***Improve lives and seek cures for those affected by ichthyosis and related skin types.***

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