

### Itching and Skin Irritation

Some people working offshore are bothered by itching and other skin irritation. This is often related to showering, especially if there is scepticism of the treatment methods in place, (chlorination, alkalizing, reverse osmosis, etc.). It is often difficult to find the cause for such symptoms however there is no evidence that disinfection methods used offshore cause itching or other skin reactions under normal circumstances. These problems and subsequent causes may vary from person to person and from one place to place. Many components, water related or not, may cause the problems to occur. Below is a list of possible causes and remedies:

- Frequent showering, using soap that removes the natural fatty protection the skin has been shown to create skin irritation and itching. There is also the possibility that people shower more often offshore than when at home. To solve such problems it is advisable to avoid taking showers every day or do without soap every time. Use of body lotion after showering may reduce the problems.
- Offshore air conditioning systems can create very dry air conditions that can easily draw moisture from skin. Loss of moisture from skin is a known contributor to irritation. Regular moisturising should prevent such moisture loss.
- Some people have seasonal symptoms particularly in colder months. This is probably a cold weather eczema caused by the skin's protective layer being washed off. Use of body lotion often reduces such problems.
- It has proven helpful for people experiencing itching and irritation of the skin to use a milder type of soap or shower oil.
- Even if the potable water in itself is not the cause of these skin problems, there are some micro-organisms existing in pipe systems that may set free substances that sensitive persons can react to. Disinfection of the cold and the hot water systems once a year can prevent growth of these micro-organisms.
- Hard water will also have an influence on how the skin may feel after showering. Taking showers in soft water makes the skin feel less dry but soapy, while showering in hard water makes the skin feel dry and coarse. Persons used to hard water will react to the soft water and the other way around.
- Treatment methods used offshore are not known to be the cause of itching or other skin reactions under normal circumstances. Correctly administered chlorination and alkalization do not result in skin disorders.