

SELF ALTERNATIVELY SPEAKING

What can I do to stop this terrible itching?

Q AT 17 I started training as a hairdresser and my hands are now covered in ugly, red eczema which looks frightful. I presume this is an allergy to some of the chemicals at work.

The itching is appalling and the rash is now spreading up my arms. A friend has suggested I use aloe vera and my doctor wants me to take steroids. I feel very confused. Can you help?

Anne Edwards, Sheffield.

by Hazel Courteney

A STEROIDS would dampen the inflammatory response, but in the long term can cause thinning skin, mood swings and lowering of the immune system.

It seems that you have a sensitivity, therefore wear pure cotton gloves under rubber

gloves to prevent the chemicals from touching your skin. Avoid using hand creams with added perfume; try a natural vitamin E cream from a health shop.

Aloe vera has been used for centuries internally and externally for healing. It contains natural anti-itching agents and has analgesic, moisturising and anti-inflammatory ingredients such as zinc, calcium, magnesium, vitamins A, B, C, E and beta carotene.

It is essential that any aloe jelly you put on your skin should be 100 per cent pure stabilised gel. Anyone drinking aloe vera to aid healing of internal tissue should be sure the pure juice contains mucopolysaccharides, the main active ingredients in aloe vera juice.

