

Cutaneous Hazards of Woodturning

Mechanical Effects:

- Splinters and bristles – some cause infections
- Abrasions – turning dry woods at high speed
- Cuts – loose fragments, sharp edges
- Trauma – bowl thrown from lathe

Irritant Skin Lesions:

- Contact with:
 - Fresh cut woods
 - Dust from tropical woods
 - Chemical irritants in wood dust
- Symptoms:
 - Redness, papular rashes, itching
 - Usually occurs soon after contact
- Usual locations:
 - Hands, wrists face and neck
- Some of the most irritant woods:
 - Chechen, afrormosia, beech, black locust, boxwood, red cedar, cocobolo, greenheart, iroko, mansonia, olive, rosewoods, yew, silky oak, Australian pine, Brazilian pepper

Allergic Contact Dermatitis

- Sensitizers in some woods:
 - May overcome the skin's normal defense mechanisms
 - May not get a reaction at initial exposure
 - Once sensitization occurs, future contact elicits a prompt reaction
- Dust Particles:
 - The finer the particles, the more likely a sensitization will occur
- Predamage of skin:
 - Frequent contact with strong detergents, solvents abrasive cleaners
 - Wet working conditions or sweaty skin increases possibility of sensitization
- Symptoms: immediate or delayed:
 - Rash, redness, swelling, burning, itching, blisters skin ulcers with necrosis
 - Later, skin shows marked thickening or scaling
- Most common woods that cause allergic dermatitis:
 - Cypress, Balsam fir, birch, boxwood, western red cedar, gonalco alves, redwood, teak, sassafras, silky oak, cocobolo, rosewood

Precautions

To help protect yourself from possible cutaneous allergic and irritant reactions, especially with toxic (sensitizing) or spalted woods:

- a) reduce dust exposure
- b) wash and shower often with mild soaps
- c) change dust-laden work clothes frequently
- d) avoid turning woods you have reacted to in the past
- e) wear proper clothing-gloves, cuffed long-sleeves shirts with high collars
- f) keep a clean work area
- g) wash hands and forearms before eating, smoking or using toilet facilities
- h) avoid contact with woods to which you have been sensitized
- i) barrier creams (limited effectiveness)

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