

**University
of Basel**

Of soap and metals: discovering contact dermatitis

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Easy recognizable skin disorders



Urticaria



Angioedema

Complex to discern: different eczemas



Examples
of various forms
of eczemas
(= dermatitis).

Understanding eczema

Important questions:

What does an eczema look like?

What causes an eczema?

Origin term 'eczema':

From Greek 'to boil over'

Describing eczemas

Paracelsus

(1493 – 1541)

Dermatitis in metalworkers.



Describing eczemas

Bernardino Ramazzini
(1633 –1741)

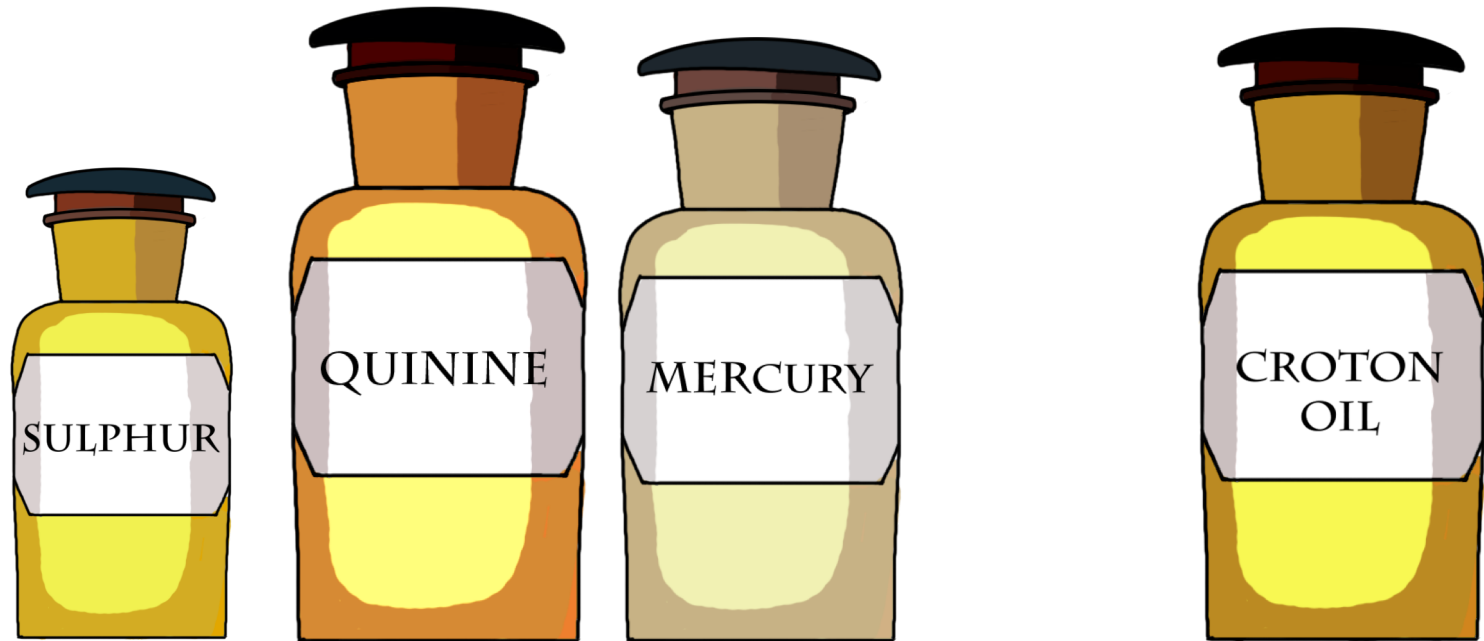
Skin diseases in people
working with soap.



Describing eczemas

19th century

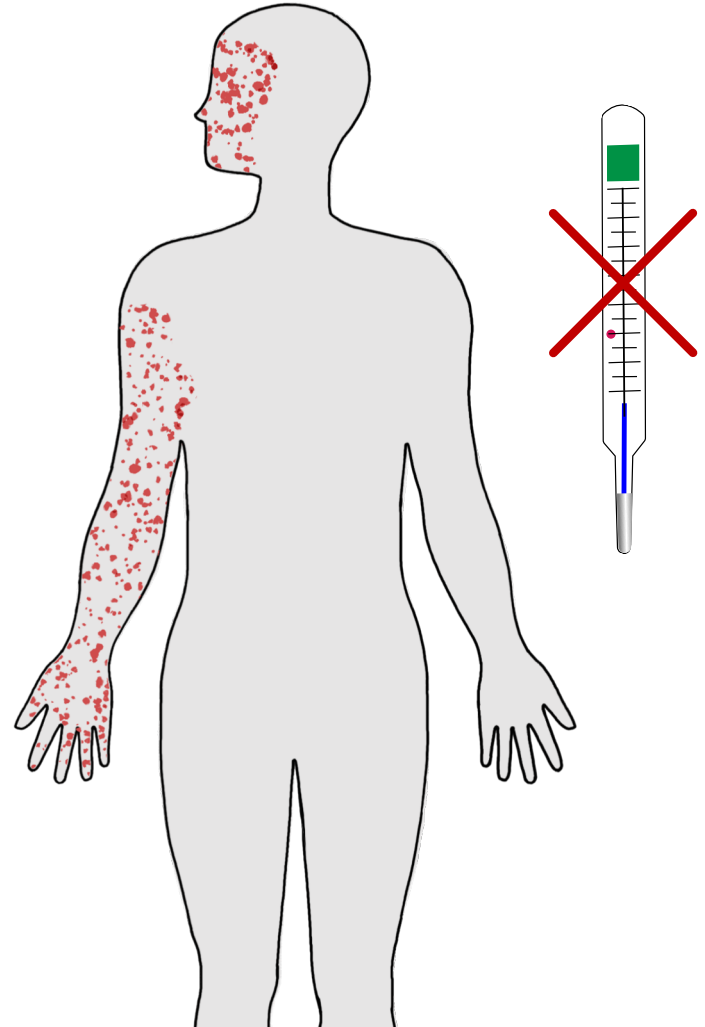
Remedies cause irritant dermatitis.



Describing eczemas

Thomas Bateman
1817

- Eruption of small vesicles
- No fever
- Not contagious
- Effect of irritation, great variety of irritants
- Constitutional element



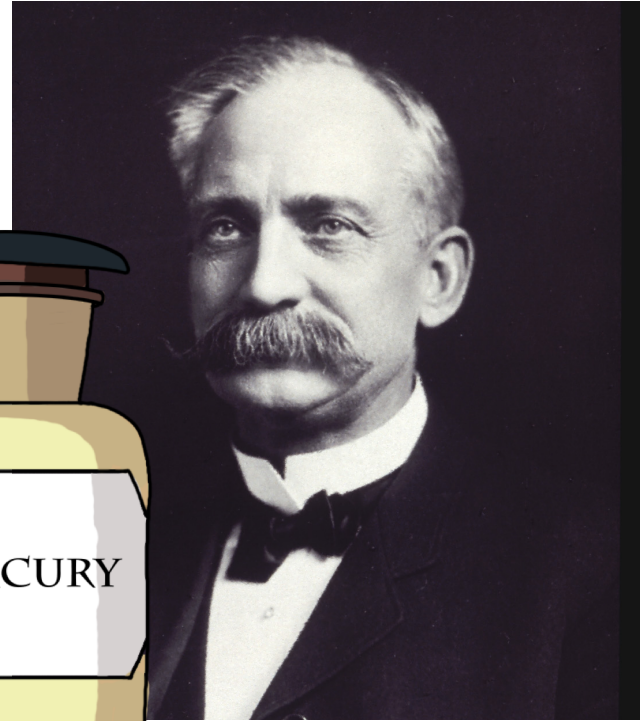
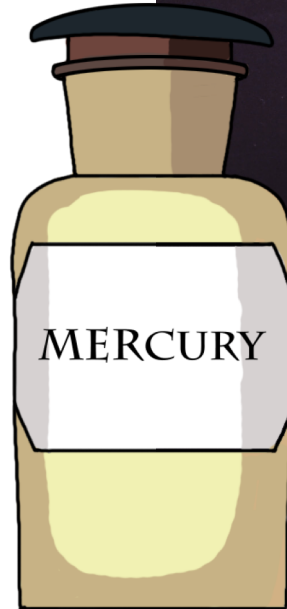
Irritant dermatitis



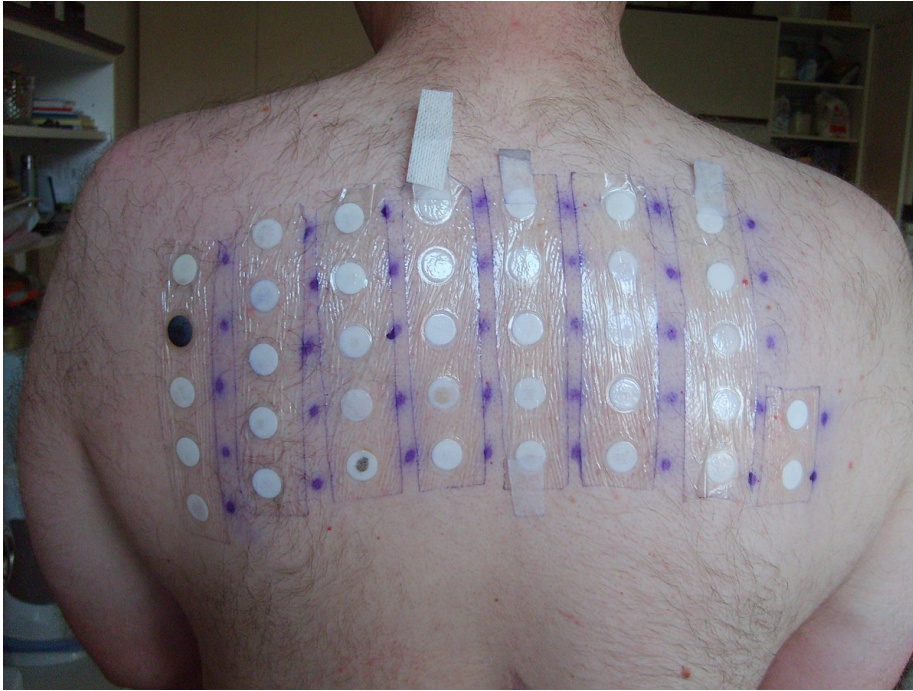
Persons predisposed to irritation.

Patch testing

Joseph Jadassohn developed idea for patch testing in 1896 after a patient had an allergic reaction to an ointment containing mercury.



Patch testing



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Jan Polák

Patch testing

Bruno Bloch
(1878 – 1933)

- Refined patch test
- Worked with iodine derivatives
- Identified 'primin' (Primula eczema)



Contact allergens today

Often responsible for allergic contact dermatitis:

- Nickel
- Chromium
- Fragrances
- Plant-derived substances like balm of Peru and colophony

Patch testing

Was useful to

- Discern allergic contact dermatitis from irritant contact dermatitis
- Study underlying mechanisms in detail
- Gain insights into the cellular basis of allergies (role of effector lymphocytes and macrophages)