

A Different Covid-19 Problem

Edward G. Lake

Independent Researcher

July 10, 2020

detect@outlook.com

***Abstract:** While the symptoms of Covid-19 are well-known, I encountered a different kind of problem which evidently resulted from a grocery store's measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.*

Key words: Covid-19; exfoliation; rash; skin.

While nothing serious resulted from my experience with Covid-19 preventive measures, I was very concerned for a while, and I experienced a lot of itching pain. The purpose of this paper is to show and explain what happened so that others might learn from my experience.

Sometime during the last two weeks of May, 2020, I recall I grabbed a handle of a shopping cart as I entered a grocery store, and that handle was dripping with some kind of antibacterial liquid. I remember it happening, but I do not remember the exact store nor what I did. Presumably, I wiped the liquid off on my pants. More importantly, I quickly forgot about it.

Then, presumably a few days later, I developed a strange sore on the first joint of my left middle finger. Off-the-shelf anti-itch creams didn't seem to help much.



Figure 1

A Different Covid-19 Problem

I'm 83 years old and scientifically minded, so on May 31, I used the camera in my laptop computer to take pictures of the sore. Figure 1 is one of those pictures.

The next day, on Monday, June 1, 2020, I decided that I should see my doctor about that sore and others that seemed to be appearing on my hands. I was able to get in to visit him that afternoon. He correctly diagnosed it as some kind of reaction to some chemical, and he suspected it most likely was something to do with gardening. However, I live in a second floor apartment and don't deal with unusual chemicals of any kind. Any chemicals I use are chemicals I've been using for decades. The doctor gave me a prescription for a stronger anti-itch cream.

When I visited the pharmacy to have the prescription filled, something unusual happened. The person behind the counter who was filling my prescription wrote the term "Covid-19" on a computer that was on the other side of the window. There didn't seem any reason for the pharmacist to do that other than to suggest to me that whatever I needed the anti-itch cream for, it might be a symptom of Covid-19.

On June 2, I saw that I had developed a similar sore on my left little finger, while the other sore was definitely getting worse. Figure 2 below is a picture I took with my digital camera.



Figure 2

By this time I was really getting worried, particularly since I kept seeing on the TV news that small children were getting unusual symptoms of Covid-19: they were getting rashes and sores. The strong anti-itch cream my doctor had prescribed didn't really help much. What helped was to avoid touching the sores. The sores itched and tingled like crazy when touched. And since there were sores forming on my fingertips, that was a real problem when I typed on my computer – something I do for hours every day. I started taking an Ibuprofen tablet about every 8 hours, and that seemed to help a bit, particularly helping me to sleep at night.

That day, June 2, I saw on the news that they had just opened a Covid-19 testing center just a few blocks from where I live. So, I went to get tested. It took 3 days to get the results, but the results were negative. I did not have Covid-19. I think that is when I began to wonder what kind of chemical I may have come into contact with. That is when I remembered the incident where I put my hands on a shopping cart handle that was dripping with some kind of anti-bacterial chemical.

A Different Covid-19 Problem



Figure 3

Meanwhile, I was starting to develop sores all over both of my hands. Figure 3 above shows my right hand, as does Figure 4 below, which is the same hand on the next day, June 3. (The writing in the background is the literature they gave me after I did the Covid-19 test.)

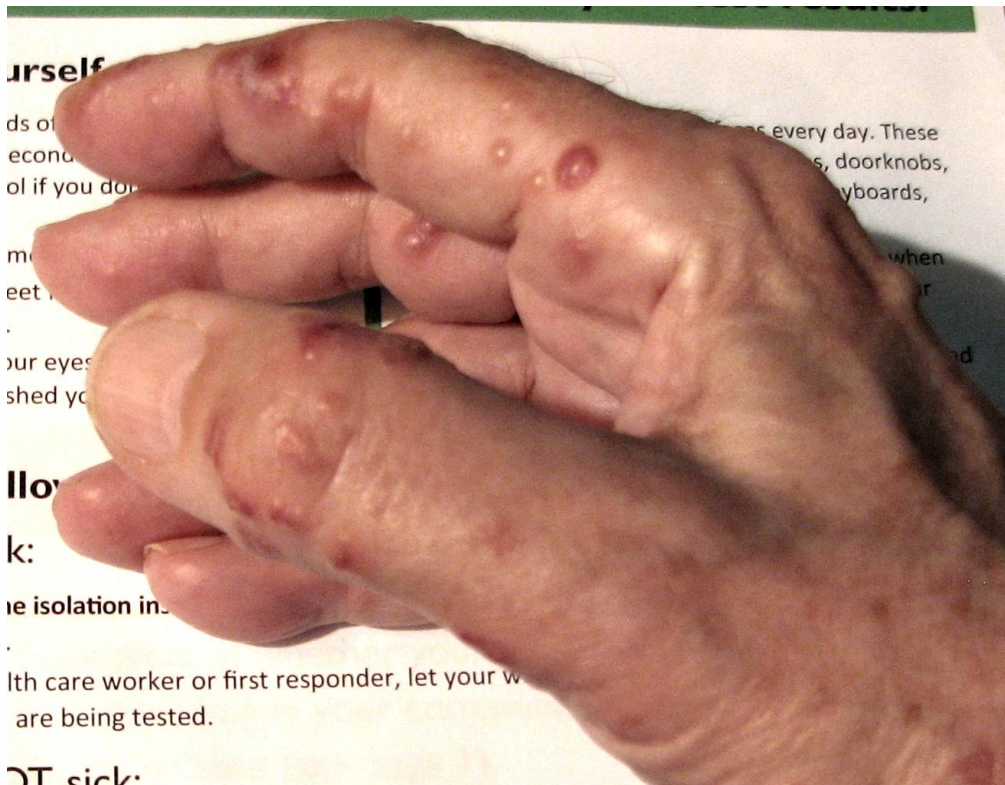


Figure 4

A Different Covid-19 Problem

Then things started to change. The little bubbles of clear liquid pus started bursting and leaking. The sores were dying. They started turning brown and crusty, as seen in Figures 5 & 6 taken on June 6.



Figure 5

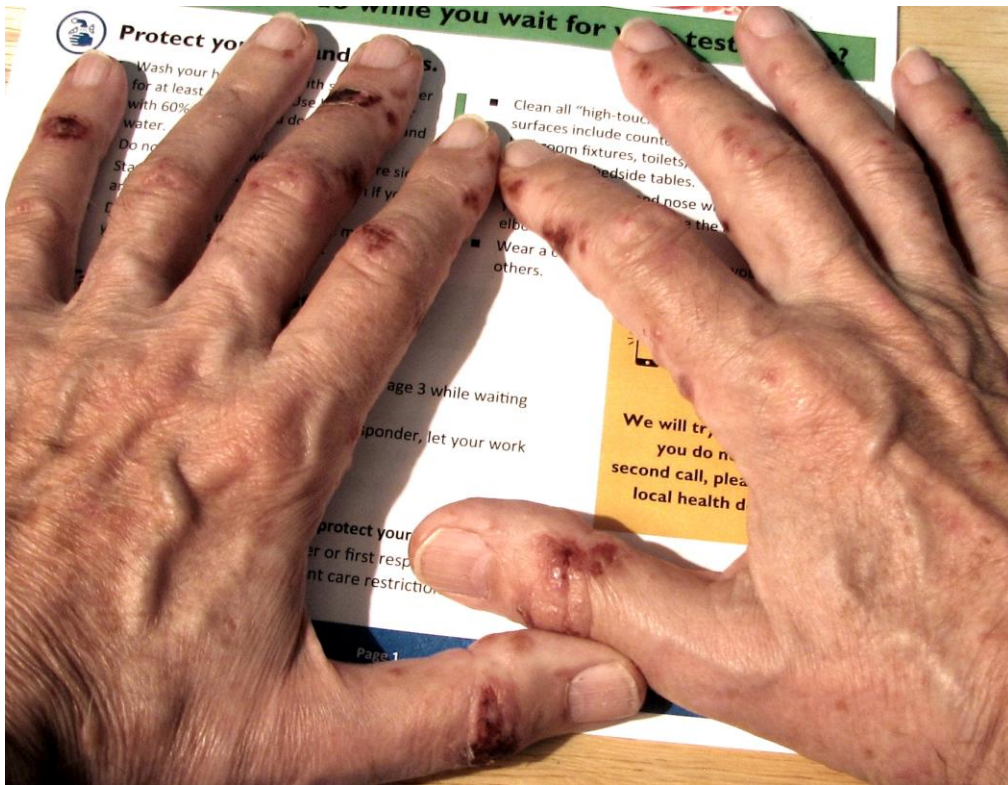


Figure 6

A Different Covid-19 Problem

By June 11, most of the dried sores were peeling away, much like removing a scab or a piece of tape that is stuck to your finger or hand. Figure 7 below shows my hands as of June 12.

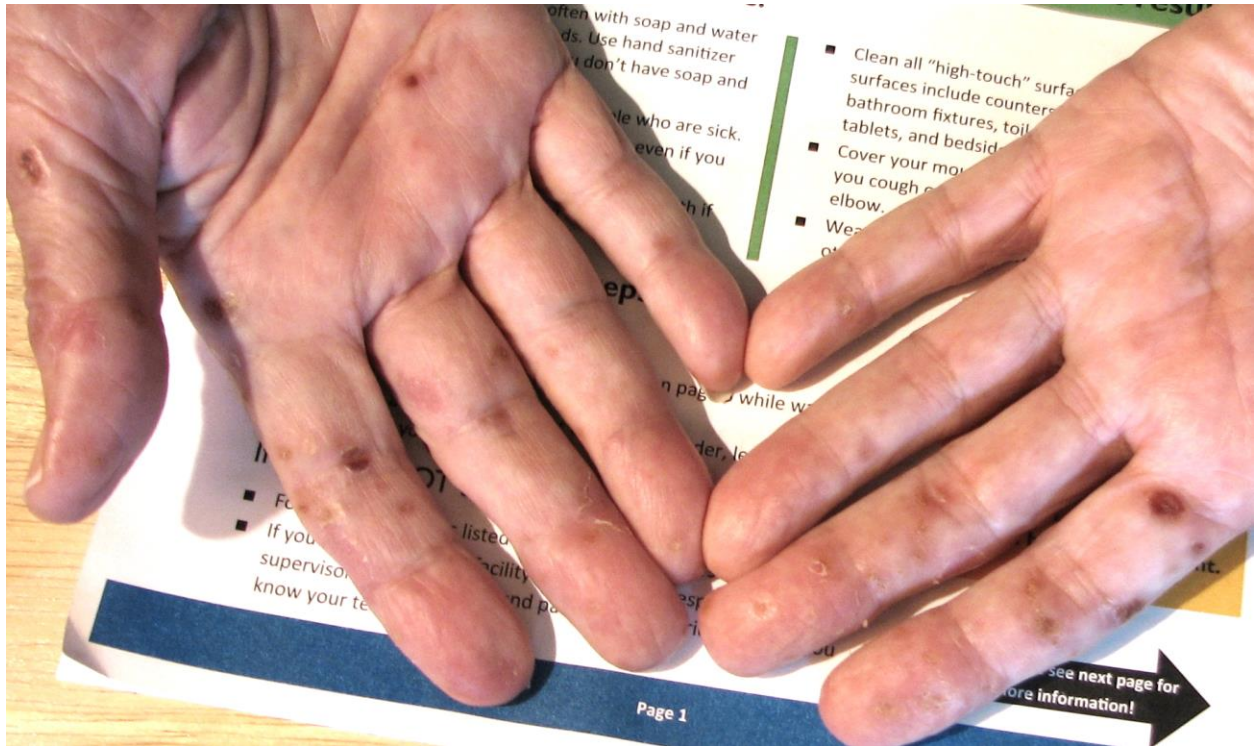


Figure 7

You can see in Figure 7 that the sores are becoming like stickers that accidentally stuck to my hands, and the ones I clawed off became shallow craters. The crater edges were loose skin and could be scraped off, too. And they itched a lot less.

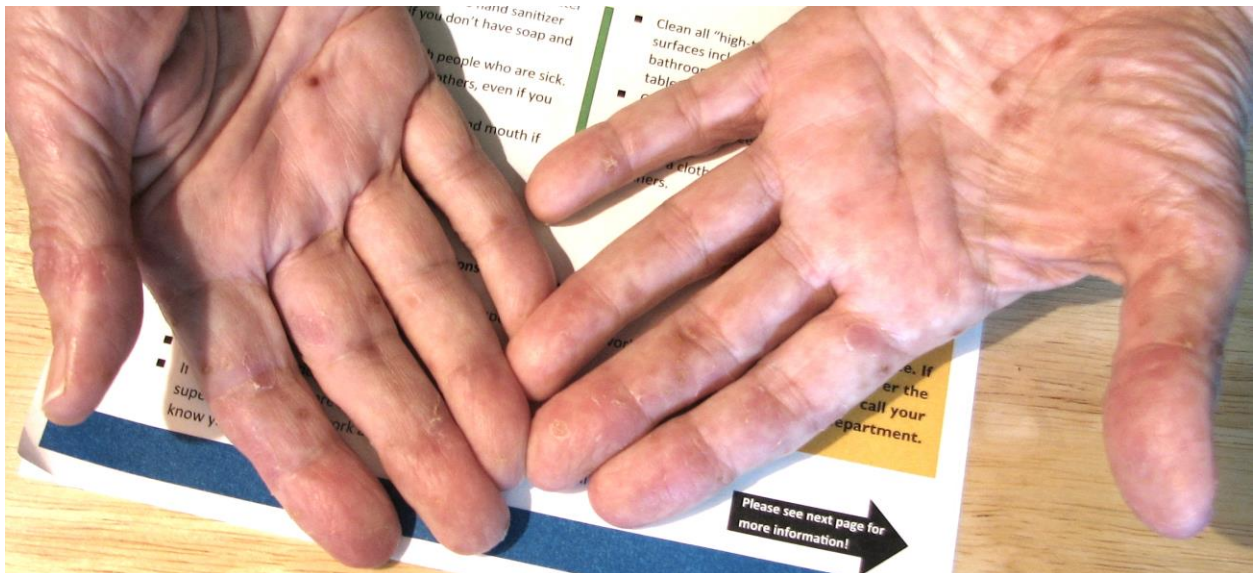


Figure 8

A Different Covid-19 Problem

Figure 8 above is a picture taken on June 13, on day after I took the Figure 7 picture.

By June 28, my hands seemed completely healed. Better than that, it seemed like I had lost a lot of old skin on my hands and it was replaced by new, smoother skin, as shown in Figures 9 and 10 below.

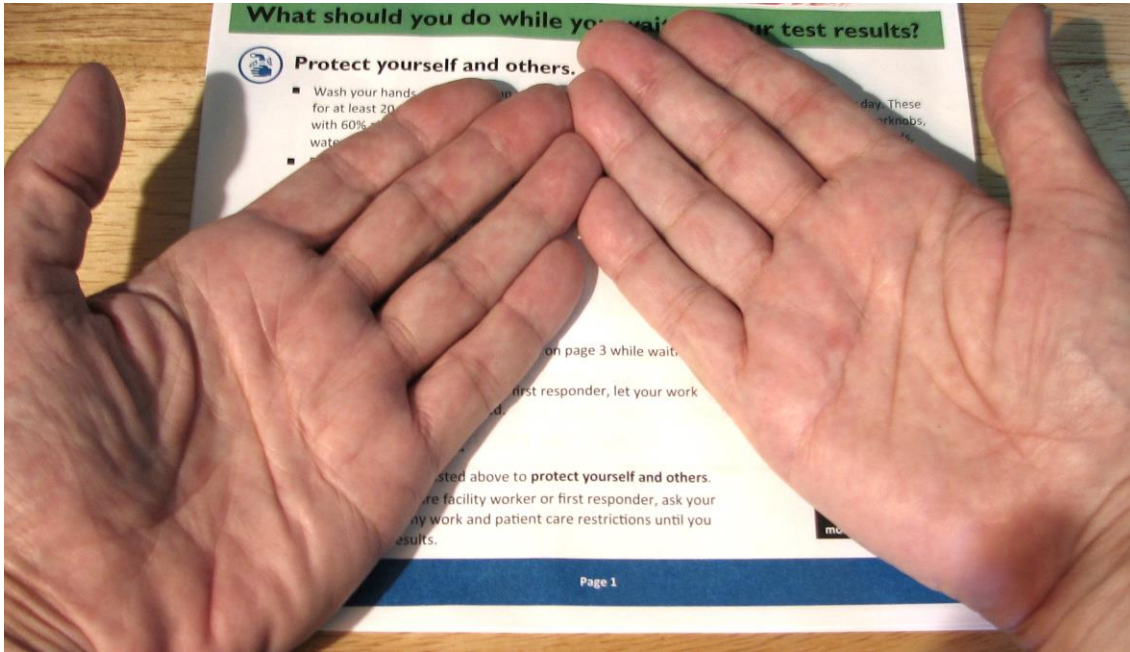


Figure 9

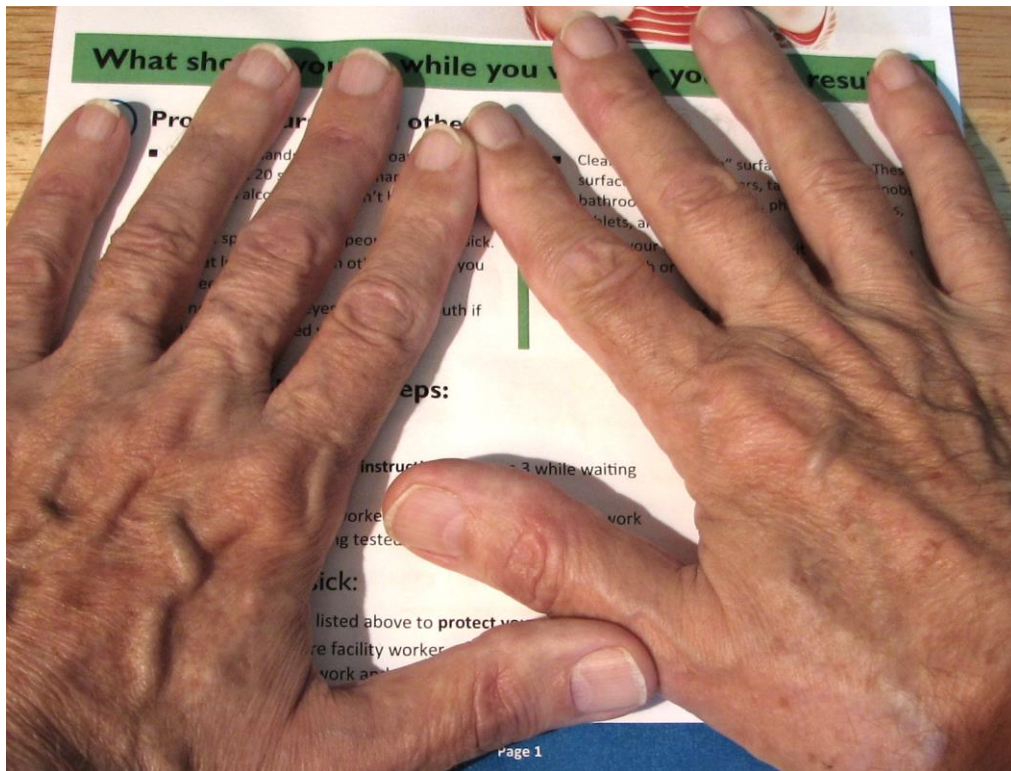


Figure 10

A Different Covid-19 Problem

I searched the Internet for others who may have had a similar experience, but for some reason most examples I could find involved children touching shopping cart handles that had recently been disinfected. One article from Canada that I found contained these passages:

Three Manitoba mothers are warning other parents about letting their children near shopping carts that have been sanitized with disinfecting chemicals, after they say their babies developed blisters, rashes and swelling from touching carts at a grocery store this month.

...

Cochrane, and some other moms, believe the chemicals that stores are using to disinfect carts and baskets during the COVID-19 pandemic are harmful for children with sensitive skin.[1]

Interestingly, the first reader comment following the article contained this:

I am a senior age 69 and I shop quite frequently for groceries and occasionally the malls. I can't help notice I have developed an irritating and annoying rash around my eyes and face.[2]

Another article from Texas contained this:

Texas mother Kira Lugo experienced the negative side effects of strong store disinfectants firsthand and is urging other grocery shoppers to be wary of disinfected carts after she said in a viral Facebook post that her child allegedly suffered chemical burns after sitting in a cart at a Walmart store in El Paso.[3]

And, of course, the CDC recommends that anyone applying disinfectant chemicals to surfaces should wear gloves, because such chemicals “can cause serious harm.” [4]

I cannot be 100% certain that the problem with my hands was caused by chemicals sprayed on shopping cart handles, but it's the only answer that makes sense. Plus, if other adults had the same problem, they may have had encounters with gardening chemicals and know how to care for the rash. So, they never make the news. Or the only people who suffer the problem are children and the elderly.

REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/rash-shopping-cart-dauphin-manitoba-1.5585417>
2. *ibid*
3. <https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Walmart-chemical-burns-disinfected-carts-COVID19-15391572.php>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>