



NICKEL DERMATITIS

1. Allergy to nickel is extremely common. It is more common in women than in men, and most frequently presents as earlobe dermatitis from earrings or as a dermatitis on the abdomen from a belt buckle.
2. Nickel allergic patients are especially susceptible to a rash when the weather is hot and they are perspiring.
3. Sweat can dissolve nickel out of metal, even through a layer of cloth, paint, nail polish or adhesive tape.
4. Very small quantities of dissolved nickel can produce a rash. Small quantities of nickel can be carried by perspiring fingers to distant sites.
5. Many metals contain nickel, including 14K gold (especially white gold) and sterling silver.
6. Stainless steel contains nickel, but the nickel is so tightly bound inside the metal that it does not leach out during ordinary contact. Hundreds of nickel allergic patients have worn surgical steel earrings without difficulty.
7. A test called the dimethylglyoxime test is available to test for nickel in metals (Delasco). Always test new jewelry before buying it; or get a written guarantee that you can return it if it causes a rash.
8. Be careful of garter snaps, wire brassiere cup supports, sanitary napkin pins, zippers, hooks, snaps, metal arch supports, belt buckles, medallions, ID tags, watch bands. Substitute plastic snaps, buttons and velcro fasteners.
9. Unless you hold a metal coin for more than 3 minutes, it is unlikely to cause a rash. Coins in pockets can produce a rash. Keep coins in a plastic bag.
10. Metal keys can cause a rash. Aluminum keys are safe.
11. Be careful of household utensils, vacuum cleaner, sewing machines, needles, thimbles, scissors, etc.
12. Purchase all-plastic eyeglass frames.
13. If you have a rash on your hands, you may be contacting cigarette lighters, lipstick cases, thimbles, bicycle handle bars.
14. A rash on the face or eyelids may be caused by hairpins, curlers, eyelash curlers, earrings, spectacle frames.
15. There are some reports that nickel in food makes nickel rashes worse. However, low nickel diets are very difficult diets to keep, and often do not help. One step is to cook food in stainless steel, aluminum or coated (e.g., teflon) pots.
16. If you need orthopedic surgery or a metal heart valve implant, let your doctor know about your allergy.
17. If a piece of jewelry has sentimental value, it can be coated with a polyurethane varnish or clear nail polish. This is only a temporary measure.