



## Patient Information Leaflet

### Nickel

You are allergic to nickel. You should avoid contact with this metal and its compounds.

#### Common presentations

1. **Reaction to jewellery or apparel:** e.g. to earrings or jeans studs.
2. **Hand dermatitis:** occasionally contact of the hands with nickel results in dermatitis. Nickel allergy is more common in people with hand dermatitis even when there is no obvious source of contact with nickel. Reasons for this are not clear at present.

#### Sources of nickel

1. **Jewellery:** European legislation limits the amount of nickel in jewellery. 22-carat gold and platinum should not cause problems. However, it is still possible that cheap jewellery, e.g. necklaces, earrings, bracelets and rings, may cause a reaction.
2. **Metal parts in clothing:** If these are in prolonged contact with the skin, problems may result even through clothing. E.g. press-studs on jeans, hooks, zips and suspenders. You should use accessories made of plastic, or metal covered with plastic or paint. Sometimes, you can cover metal with clear nail varnish but this wears off.
3. **Other personal objects:** E.g. lipstick cases, powder compacts, clasps on handbags and purses, cigarette lighters, electric razors, wristwatches, spectacle frames, hair clips, hair pins, key rings, pen-knives\*, pens and pencils. Contact with the skin for more than a few minutes would be needed for dermatitis to occur.
4. **Home environment:** Although nickel is widespread in the home, quite prolonged contact (i.e. more than a few minutes) would be needed to induce dermatitis. Objects containing nickel include: handles on drawers and cupboards, kitchen utensils, toasters, scissors, needles and knitting needles, pins, telephones (including mobiles), vacuum cleaners, sewing machines, prams, hooks, screws and paper clips. Transient contact is unlikely to induce dermatitis in most patients. Nickel is found in some eye cosmetics.
5. **Coin handling:** silver-coloured coins contain nickel, e.g. British 20p, £2 coin, and the Euro coin. Day-to-day handling of coins is unlikely to produce dermatitis in most patients. However, prolonged contact of coins with the skin will do, e.g. if coins are kept in a trouser pocket.
6. **Work environment:** Other objects in the home or office include typewriter parts, hole-punchers, staplers, scissors, paperclips and pens. Again, quite prolonged contact would be required for dermatitis to develop.
7. **Steel:** Most stainless steels do not seem to cause a problem.
8. **Orthopaedic implants:** This is a difficult area. Very occasionally, nickel-allergic patients have reacted to static implants, i.e. plates used for bone fractures. For plastic-on-metal hips, experience has shown there to be little problem. However, it is still too soon to say whether there may be problems with the newer metal-on-metal hips, or with other joint prosthesis, which might have a metal-on-metal component. If there is doubt, it is usually appropriate to recommend the orthopaedic surgeon uses a titanium prosthesis.
9. **Diet:** Whether nickel in the diet causes dermatitis is controversial. It is unlikely to be important in most nickel-allergic patients.

#### Avoidance

Those objects that cannot be replaced by other material and cannot be avoided may be painted with a colourless brass lacquer after cleaning with acetone. A *spot testing kit* using the chemical dimethylglyoxime is available to test objects for nickel.