

Metal Allergy

Definition

- A skin allergy to metal.

Health Information

Symptoms

- A red, itchy rash where the metal touches the skin. The rash can have bumps. The rash may sometimes have blisters.
- Common places for allergic reactions: neck (from a necklace), earlobe (from earrings), fingers (from rings), belly (from pants snaps), and face (from eyeglass frames).
- The rash can have a defined shape that looks like the jewelry that caused it.
- The rash is not contagious.
- This allergy is not serious.

Causes

- Nickel is the most common metal that causes an allergic reaction. Less common causes are chromium, palladium and gold.
- These metals are found in jewelry and on metal parts of clothing.

Care Advice

1. Key Points

- Some people have a skin allergy to metal. Nickel is the most common cause.
- The metal causes a red, itchy rash where it touches the skin.
- Here is some home care advice that should help.

2. Avoid Nickel Jewelry

- Avoid wearing jewelry with nickel. Nickel is common in costume jewelry.
- There is no nickel in 18-karat (or higher) yellow gold.
- Sterling silver, copper, titanium, and platinum jewelry are also safe options.

3. Create a Barrier

- If you can't avoid the metal, create a barrier between it and your body.
- Try covering buttons, snaps or zippers with duct tape or Nickel Guard.
- Putting clear nail polish on the metal may help. When it wears off, reapply it.

4. Treat Itching

- If the area is itchy, a steroid cream should help.
- Apply 1% hydrocortisone cream. No prescription is needed.
- Use it 3 times per day until itching stops.
- For severe itching, you can also give an antihistamine. Examples are diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or cetirizine (Zyrtec). For dosing, follow package directions.

5. What to Expect

- The rash gets better when you avoid the metal that caused it.
- If you aren't sure which metal causes the allergy, an allergy doctor can help.

Call Your Doctor If

- Rash gets worse
- Rash lasts more than 1 week after avoiding the metal.
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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