

RESOLUTION

Subject: Support for Issuing Nickel Allergen Advisory and Limiting the Quantity of Nickel in Products with Prolonged Skin Contact

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Referred to: Reference Committee

WHEREAS, nickel allergy is estimated to affect about 10% of the population in the United States and is the leading allergen in both children and adults¹; and

WHEREAS, nickel is present in a myriad of commonly used items that often impose prolonged skin contact, including but not limited to jewelry, zippers, household pots and pans, metal tools, cell phones, eyeglass frames, coins, and many food products²; and

WHEREAS, nickel allergy is non life-threatening in the majority of cases, it can cause a delayed inflammatory response that can exacerbate asthma symptoms, and cause an extremely uncomfortable rash that can be persistent and debilitating and potentially lead to infection⁶; and

WHEREAS, the American Contact Dermatitis Society has demonstrated that contact dermatitis disproportionately affects women and people of lower socioeconomic status, and Kentucky is the fourth most impoverished state in the nation³; and

WHEREAS, production workers have a high rate of contact dermatitis related to their occupation with one of the most common allergens being nickel⁴; and

WHEREAS, a substantial amount of the workforce in Kentucky is in production with estimates of 79,000 people working in construction, 243,000 people working in manufacturing, and 405,000 people working in transportation and utilities⁵; and

WHEREAS, Orthopaedics Today declared nickel allergy a crisis in 2019 because it has been demonstrated that after total knee replacement, incidence of nickel hypersensitivity increases to 20%,¹ and the need for total joint replacement is anticipated to quadruple by 2040⁸; and

WHEREAS, there is no cure for a nickel allergy; the best way to prevent the allergic reaction is to avoid exposure⁷; and

WHEREAS, the European Union issued a directive in 2001 that both limited the use of nickel in products and increased education about the prevalence of nickel allergy and has since seen a reduction in nickel allergy incidence⁹; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, the KMA supports setting limitations on nickel in products with prolonged skin contact and encourages promoting education and awareness about nickel-containing products and the subsequent delayed hypersensitivity reaction that remains lifelong after initial sensitization.

References:

- ¹ Orthopaedics today: Metal Allergy: A Clinical Conundrum (January 16, 2019) <https://www.healio.com/news/orthopedics/20190111/metal-allergy-a-clinical-conundrum>
- ² American Academy of Dermatology Association: Nickel Allergy: How to Avoid Exposure and Reduce Symptoms (2021) <https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/eczema/insider/nickel-allergy#:~:text=Nickel%20is%20one%20of%20the,million%20children%20in%20the%20U.S.>
- ³ American Contact Dermatitis Society: Sociology of Nickel Allergy (2018) https://journals.lww.com/dermatitis/Citation/2018/09000/Sociology_of_Nickel_Allergy.14.aspx
- ⁴ Occupational Contact Dermatitis in North American Production Workers Referred for Patch Testing: Retrospective Analysis of Cross-Sectional Data From the North American Contact Dermatitis Group 1998 to 2014 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28394773/>
- ⁵ Kentucky Economy at a Glance <https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.ky.htm>
- ⁶ Nickel Institute: What do you need to know about nickel allergy <https://nickelinstitute.org/science/health-nickel-allergy/>
- ⁷ Medical News Today: How to manage a nickel allergy <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321400#diagnosis>
- ⁸ Increased Rate of Total Joint Replacements Predicted from 2020 to 2040 <https://www.rheumatologyadvisor.com/home/topics/osteoarthritis/increased-rate-of-total-joint-replacements-predicted-from-2020-to-2040/#:~:text=The%20annual%20number%20of%20total,in%202040%20to%203%2C416%2C000%20replacements.>
- ⁹ Nickel Allergy and EU Restriction (2017) <https://nickelinstitute.org/media/3861/201709-nacd-ws-report-brussels-final.pdf>