

Black Henna: Cosmetic Product with Unsightly Results

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Sir,

Henna is a product used to color hair, but also to design labile tattoos on the skin. Black henna is becoming more fashionable and it results from a mixture with paraphenylenediamine (PPD). Contact eczema after applying black henna tattoo can lead to active sensitization to PPD, which can provoke violent allergic reactions [1]. Local cutaneous signs decrease in a few days and after healing of eczema, residual post inflammatory hyperpigmentation may last for few weeks. We report a new case of a black henna contact eczema.

A 30-year-old male patient, with no medical history presented to our dermatological department for a well-defined erythematous and blistering cutaneous lesions of the left forearm (FIG. 1). He developed intensely pruritic with a burning sensation of the skin, having occurred the day after the realization of an aesthetic black henna tattoo on the back of the forearm, and which is containing paraphenylenediamine (PPD).



FIG. 1. Erythematous and edematous closet with vesicles on the left forearm after applying black henna.

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The diagnosis of PPD contact eczema was retained, and a Class 1 of topical corticosteroids was used at the rate of one application per day, for a period of 3 weeks which led to good improvement. Our patient was lost to follow-up, so no patch-test was performed.

The black henna tattoo gives users a false sense of "security" because of its labile nature. PPD; this chemical substance is added in illegal amounts to henna to give it its black color and improve its fixation. It is a molecule with high allergic potential and mainly used in hair dyes and textile colorations, photographic processes and moreover, in the black labile tattoos. It responsible for allergic contact dermatitis and more exceptionally for immediate hypersensitivity reactions (urticaria, angioedema, anaphylactoid shock) [2].

No allergological investigation by PPD patch test was carried out. Recently, their interest has been questioned, given their positivity in patients with contact eczema after black henna tattooing. In addition, there is a great risk of an extremely serious reaction as well as sensitization to other allergens during the tests [3].

The management requires treatment with Class 1 or Class 2 topical corticosteroids, an allergological evaluation, and reporting this side effect to cosmeto-vigilance department, which should be systematic [4].

Despite continuous warnings from health authority centers, several cases of contact eczema secondary to the ornamental black henna tattoo have been reported, hence the interest in multiplying information campaigns, pending legislation prohibiting the import and sale of this plant.

Finally, an important work remains to be done to make the population aware of the danger of using this cosmetic product, because in the end, should you risk developing a severe allergy for an ephemeral tattooing?

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