Nickel allergy commonly develops following ear piercing and the use of metal jewellery. European Union legislation currently limits the amount of nickel released from metals in prolonged contact with the skin and it is hoped that the allergy may become less common in the future. The allergy results in the development of a localized eczema/dermatitis.

Key facts:

Pure gold (18 carat or more), solid silver and platinum are usually safe alternatives for jewellery.

Orthopaedic pins and plates may result in eczema affecting the overlying skin.

Nickel allergy is more common in people with hand dermatitis although the reason for this is not always clear. If you regularly handle money, this may contribute as coins release nickel and exposure to nickel builds up with repeated contact.

Clinical contributions:

Allergy UK Clinical Team
Amena Warner, Head of Clinical Services

Allergy UK Clinical Team
Mark Wilkinson, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Additional Resources / References

Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis)
https://www.allergyuk.org/types-of-allergies/eczema/

Skin Allergy Resources
https://www.allergyuk.org/allergyuk-resources/?conditions=80

Visit us at: allergyuk.org

If you have any comments about this Factsheet, contact Allergy UK on info@allergyuk.org. The guidance in this Factsheet is based on current best practice and may be subject to change in the light of new relevant information.

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