

**Position Statement on
Nickel Sensitivity
(Approval by the Board of Directors: August 22, 2015;
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The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) recommends public awareness and education of nickel sensitivity as a widespread public health concern. Nickel is one of the most common preventable causes of allergic contact dermatitis. Allergic contact dermatitis is a common cause of both pediatric and adult skin diseases including occupational skin disease. The AAD is committed to reducing nickel allergy by limiting exposure and by promoting public education.

Nickel prevalence in North America has risen significantly since the mid-1980s,¹ and the North American Contact Dermatitis Group (NACDG) found that approximately 16.2% of individuals patch tested had a positive reaction for nickel in 2017-2018.² Further, the prevalence may be even higher in children.^{4,5} Nickel has remained the most common allergen according to the patch test review by the NACDG.²

Nickel can be found in common consumer products, such as jewelry (especially earrings), keys, jean buttons/studs, infant clothing snaps, and children's toys.^{7,8} A consumer with prolonged skin exposure to this metal may develop intensely itchy rashes that persist. For many patients, allergy to nickel causes skin disease leading to reduced self-esteem and quality of life, as well as significant utilization of medical care.⁹⁻¹¹ Nickel allergic consumers with repeated contact may experience a continuous dermatitis on critical body areas, which may be disabling and which may also generalize to extensive surfaces of the body. Estimates suggest that contact dermatitis, which includes nickel sensitization, accounts for approximately \$1.5 billion in medical treatment and \$699 million in lost productivity.¹³

It is the amount of nickel released from an article, not the fact that the article contains nickel, which determines the potential for causing nickel allergic contact dermatitis. The AAD supports using both the safest and most appropriate materials in consumer products for many reasons, including avoidance of adverse health effects. If the use of a product involves direct and prolonged contact with the skin, including body piercings, then only appropriate materials should be used to avoid nickel allergic contact dermatitis.

References:

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This Position Statement is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It is intended to offer physicians guiding principles and policies regarding the practice of dermatology. This Position Statement is not intended to establish a legal or medical standard of care. Physicians should use their personal and professional judgment in interpreting these guidelines and applying them to the particular circumstances of their individual practice arrangements.