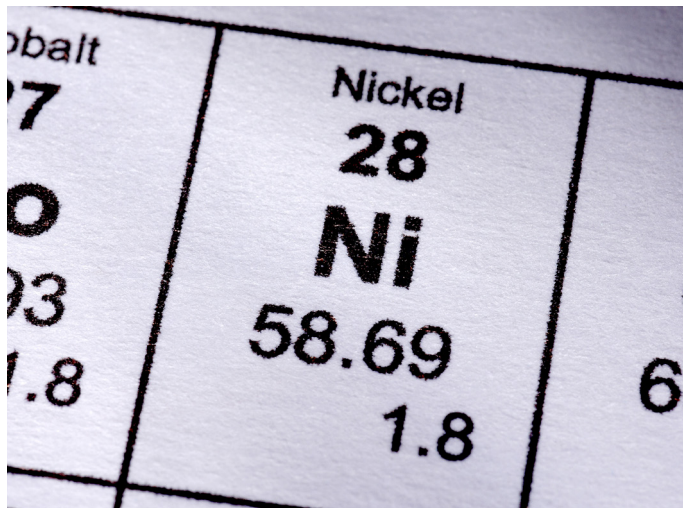


Two Cents about Nickel



Nickel is a leading cause of allergic contact dermatitis—an itchy rash that develops when a person’s skin touches a normally harmless material.

Nickel is a silver-colored metal that is mixed with other metals to make coins, jewelry, eyeglass frames, home fixtures, keys and other common items. In people allergic to it, nickel causes an itchy red rash, similar to a reaction from poison ivy.

More women than men are allergic to nickel. This is probably because women are more likely to have pierced ears. Studies show that body piercing is the single most common cause of nickel allergy.

While there is no cure for nickel allergy, allergic reactions can be prevented by avoiding products that contain it. Home testing kits are available to check metal items for nickel.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Nickel is the most common metal that people are allergic to. In sensitive people, it causes a red itchy, bumpy rash.
- Reactions can occur up to two days after touching the metal and can last up to a month.
- Jewelry is a frequent trigger of nickel allergy. The only way to prevent a reaction is to avoid wearing metal with nickel in it.
- Visit www.aaaai.org for more information on nickel allergy and other skin allergies.
- See an allergist if you think you have a nickel allergy.

Only wear nickel-free jewelry, including earrings, necklaces and watches. Keep a barrier, such as an undershirt, between your skin and metal snaps and zippers on clothing.

If you are having your ears pierced, choosing the right pair of earrings can prevent nickel allergy from developing. Wear only stainless steel or solid gold earrings until the piercing has completely healed—about three weeks.

While most reactions are uncomfortable and unattractive, they are usually easily treated. Your allergist/immunologist can recommend the best treatment for an allergic reaction.

If the rash is small, a doctor may prescribe medicated creams (topical corticosteroids) to rub on the irritated skin. For larger or more serious outbreaks, pills may be required.

Talk to your allergist/immunologist if you think you have a nickel allergy. An allergist/immunologist is the best doctor to diagnose nickel allergy and prescribe treatments.

To the Point

Nickel can be found in braces, crowns and dentures. Be sure to tell your dentist or orthodontist if you have a nickel allergy. Orthopedic surgeons may also use hardware that contains nickel.

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Henry Yeates, MD • Tammy Jacobs, MD • Evangeline Lindorf, NP
Orem • Payson
801.226.3600