

## **NICKEL ALLERGY**

### **What causes nickel allergy?**

Nickel allergy, like other allergies, may develop at any age. We don't know why some persons become allergic to nickel while others never do. Once you've become allergic to nickel, you're likely to have the allergy for many years.

Nickel allergy is especially common in women. It often prevents them from wearing jewelry. Persons allergic to nickel may break out from contact with nickel-containing or nickel-plated objects such as bracelets, earrings, zippers, bra hooks, and metal eyeglass frames. Although many coins contain nickel, they don't usually cause rashes.

Some persons are highly allergic to nickel and get a rash from even brief contact with nickel-containing metals, while others break out only after a long period of skin contact with nickel. All jewelry contains nickel; however there is less nickel in 14 or 18 karat gold jewelry. As a result, many are able to wear high quality gold jewelry.

Persons allergic to nickel can touch stainless steel without trouble, unless it's nickel-plated. Therefore, you don't need to worry about contact with stainless steel instruments, tools, sinks, cutlery, or cooking utensils.

### **Treatment**

Nickel-allergy rashes usually clear up once contact with the nickel-containing metal is stopped and cortisone cream is applied to the rash. Preventing nickel-containing rashes means avoiding skin contact with nickel-containing metals. If you choose to wear nickel-containing jewelry for short periods of time, apply cortisone cream to your skin prior to wearing it. Hypoallergenic earrings may be helpful to you.

### **Desensitization**

There is no way to desensitize a person with nickel allergy. The allergy continues for years but may become less severe.

Contact your physician if you have any questions or problems.