LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONTACT DEPIGMENTATION CAUSED BY HENNA

To the Editor

Contact dermatitis can produce depigmentation and can cause cosmetic embarrassment. Contact depigmentation (CD) has been reported with bindi, footwear and lipliners[1] mainly caused by paratertiary butyl phenol used in the adhesives.[2] CD with alta caused by azo dyes was reported.[3] Melanocyte destruction in CD could be due to immunological reaction to chemicals or due to toxic effect of chemicals on the melanocytes.

Henna is widely used in India and is considered safe and CD with henna has not been reported as far as we could search literature. Here we are reporting an unusual case of contact depigmentation due to henna.

A newly wed, 24 year-old female applied old henna on hands and forearms on eve of Karva-Chauth from some professional. She started having itching after about 8 hours of application which was relieved with some medications. After 2-3 days, she started noticing depigmented lesions at the site of application of henna which became more prominent gradually. Multiple depigmented macules taking fine intricate pattern of henna design were observed interspersed between orange red pattern. Same material could not be patch tested as professional refused to give henna powder he was using. CD in the present case was in the pattern of henna design and hence it was interpreted that it was due to henna.

CD in the present case probably was due to immunological reaction as itching started after more than 8 hours of application of henna and toxic effects leading to destruction of melanocytes were not responsible as duration of exposure to henna powder was only 18 hours.

Purpose of this paper is to highlight that very rarely even henna application can result in hazards such as CD especially if extra ingredients are added to enhance its colour and exact contents are not disclosed.

Henna application is prevalent throughout India and is considered safe. It should be mandatory for professionals to use only safe and permitted ingredients to enhance its colour and they sould be disclosed to customers.

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References

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