

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

CONTACT SENSITIVITY TO TOILET SOAPS

Y C Minocha, V K Sood, A Dogra

Out of 200 patients suspected to be suffering from contact dermatitis due to toilet soaps, patch tests were found to be positive in 158 patients (79%). The contact sensitivity was more frequently seen with perfumed soaps (48%) followed by non perfumed ordinary soaps (32%), glycerine soaps (8.2%), Herbal soaps (5.0%), antiseptic soaps (4.4%) and baby soaps (1.2%), predominantly in females (80%); majority of them belonging to age group of 21-40 yrs.

Key Words : Contact sensitivity, Toilet soaps

Introduction

Although, soaps by themselves are considered to be non sensitizers but their ingredients e.g. lanoline, perfumes, colouring agents, antiseptics and colophony may act as allergens.¹ Contact dermatitis due to a toilet soap can involve entire skin surface predominantly involving body folds or hands. In a survey conducted at various centres in India; ordinary bathing soaps were found to elicit positive patch tests in approximately 25% persons against 10% positivity with a glycerin soap.²

This study was conducted to assess the relative sensitivity of various types of commonly used toilet soaps in India; categorized as perfumed soaps, non perfumed ordinary soaps, glycerine soaps, antiseptic soaps, herbal soaps and baby soaps.

Materials and Methods

Unselected 200 patients, suspected to be suffering from contact dermatitis due to toilet soaps attending contact dermatitis clinic of out patients department of dermatology at

Dayanand Medical College, Ludhiana were the subjects for this study. A detailed history and examination of each patient was recorded with particular reference to types of toilet soap used by them and distribution pattern of dermatitis. All the patients were subjected to patch tests with various categories of toilet soaps mentioned above using 1.0% solution of soaps and 0.5% sodium hydroxide solution as per recommendations and procedures described by Pasricha.²

Results

Out of 200 patients tested 158 patients showed positivity of patch tests with various toilet soaps being more frequent in females (female to male ratio: 4.1: 1); majority of them (70%) belonging to age group of 21-40 yrs. Perfumed soaps and ordinary soaps showed positivity of patch tests in a large number of patients as compared to glycerine soaps and other types of soaps (Table I). Sodium hydroxide (0.5%) did not elicit positive patch test in any of the patients.

Comments

This study indicates that perfumed and ordinary toilet soaps have more sensitizing potential as compared to glycerine soaps, antiseptic soaps and baby soaps.

From the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology, Dayanand Medical College and Hospital, Ludhiana- 141 001, India.
Address Correspondence to : Dr Y C Minocha.

Ind J D
Table I
Type of
Perfume
ordinary
perfume
Glycerin
Herbal s
Antisept
Baby so
Total

T
of glyce

Table I. Showing positivity of patch tests with various types of toilet soaps in both sexes

Type of soap	Positive Patch Test		
	Females	Males	Total
Perfumed soaps	63	14	77
ordinary non perfumed soaps	42	9	51
Glycerine soaps	8	5	13
Herbal soaps	7	1	8
Antiseptic soaps	5	2	7
Baby soaps	2	-	2
Total	127	31	158

The finding of lesser sensitizing potential of glycerine soap (8.2%) agrees with the earlier

reports of a survey conducted at various centres in India.² In addition, this study further highlights that herbal soaps and antiseptic soaps also have lesser potentials of sensitization and baby soaps are least offending agents, which can be safely recommended by the dermatologists, who are often sought an opinion regarding choice of soaps by their patients.

References

1. Cronin E. Contact dermatitis. 1st edn. New York: Churchill Livingstone, 1980; 814-5.
2. Pasricha JS. Contact Dermatitis in India, 2nd edn. New Delhi: Department of Science and Technology, 1988.