

Contact dermatitis caused by mehindi

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SUMMARY

Several cases of contact dermatitis from mehindi tattoos have already been reported in recent literature, in which the most frequent cause of sensitisation was para-phenylenediamine (PPD). In fact mixtures called with various names, for example "black henna", used to perform skin-drawings, possibly contain natural henna, a rare and weak sensitizer, and likely contain chemical colouring agents, such as PPD. Our case presented a highly positive patch test reaction to PPD as well as other positive reactions occurring close to the first one, in particular to disperse yellow 3, disperse red 1, balsam of Peru and benzocaine.

Introduction

Mehindi is an ancient art of painting the skin using a paste made from leaves of *Lawsonia inermis*. This is the botanical denomination given to a small shrub, which grows in Egypt, Tunisia, Iran, India, Arabia and tropical Africa, also known as henne, al-khanna and al-henna. The leaves of this plant are dried and then powdered in order to obtain a yellow-green powder, which is dissolved in hot water at the moment of use. The application of this paste on the skin for 30-40 minutes leaves temporary tattoos. The most probable cause of contact dermatitis due to mehindi is the presence of para-phenylenediamine (PPD), which is added to the paste to strengthen the colour. Among the numerous

mixtures containing henna and chemical colouring agents, there is the so-called "black henna" (1).

Case report

We report the case of a 39-year-old woman, housewife, presented with acute blistering eruptions respectively on her upper back and left arm, the shape of which corresponded exactly to temporary tattoos made with "black henna" during a holiday in Egypt (Fig.1 and 2).

The patient complained for intense itching and burning localized at the site of the dermatitis.

KEY WORDS

contact,
dermatitis,
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