

Parent Plus: Nickel in electronic devices, food can cause rash

February 23, 2016

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Article type: [Parent Plus](#)

Topics: [Allergy/Immunology](#)

If your child complains of an itchy rash after wearing a belt with a buckle or jeans with a metal button, she might be allergic to nickel. The metal is used in clothes and jewelry and also can be found in cellphones, tablets and even food.

Regardless of whether your child wears an item made with nickel or eats food containing nickel, the allergic reaction is the same. Symptoms include an itchy rash on the skin with redness, scaling and possibly a crusty appearance.

Called nickel-allergic contact dermatitis, the allergy affects about 11 million children. Symptoms appear hours to days after exposure to a product containing nickel. A rash can appear on the area of the skin exposed to nickel, or it can be more widespread, according to a study from the American Academy of Pediatrics' journal *Pediatrics*.

Contact your pediatrician if you suspect your child has an allergy to nickel. Your doctor might suggest using an ointment or antihistamine.

If your child has a nickel allergy, take these precautions to avoid future reactions:

- Look for belts, watches and jewelry that are labeled "nickel-free," or buy items that are hypoallergenic or made from surgical-grade stainless steel, gold, silver or platinum.
- Use clear nail polish to coat the metal on parts that touch the skin.
- Buy a case for your tablet or phone that covers the parts made of metal.
- Avoid foods containing nickel, including chocolate and cocoa powder, nuts, soy products, black tea, seeds and commercial salad dressings.
- Avoid eating canned food, and avoid cooking acidic foods like tomato, vinegar or lemon in stainless steel cookware.
- Run tap water for a few seconds before washing, drinking and cooking to help flush out any nickel that leaches from pipes and fixtures.

For more information about common childhood allergies, visit the AAP Healthy Children website, <http://bit.ly/1R7cjpY>.

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