

JEAN STUD DERMATITIS

Jean stud dermatitis is a fancy medical term referring to a form of an allergic dermatitis caused by nickel. The word dermatitis refers to the red, inflamed, itchy skin that occurs in the area. The term eczema is often used interchangeably with the word dermatitis. The jean stud refers to one of the potential sources of nickel. In most blue jeans there is a metal stud on the inside of the pants, which rubs against the area just below the belly button. This is where the problem occurs.

Jean stud dermatitis is a form of nickel allergy. Many patients are allergic to nickel metal, especially women. This often occurs when there is exposure to nickel by ear piercing. In some cases, however, it can simply develop from contact with nickel on the skin. Many forms of jewelry, including rings, necklaces, bracelets, as well as earrings, contain nickel. The snap in blue jeans also contains nickel, hence the term jean stud dermatitis. In babies with nickel sensitivity, spots of dermatitis develop where the snaps on their “onesies” touch their skin.

Skin reactions in nickel allergic dermatitis range from tense blisters to the dark and rough skin that occurs around the belly button due to repeated exposure to nickel in the jean stud. It can be quite itchy. Often people do not associate the rash on their abdomen with a reaction they had before to cheap jewelry but these are caused by the same condition.

The treatment for nickel allergic dermatitis is the avoidance of nickel. Only gold or sterling silver jewelry should be worn. You should not buy jeans with metal studs. If this cannot be avoided, a patch of material should be sewn over the stud on the inside of the blue jeans so it does not come in contact with your skin. Covering the jean stud with nail polish or a band-aid does not work and there is still significant nickel exposure.

To treat the skin reaction that has already occurred you may need to use topical medication that I will prescribe. Some of the chronic thickening that can occur if there has been prolonged exposure to nickel may require a long period of time to reverse.

Most cases of jean stud dermatitis and nickel dermatitis can be easily treated. If you have any other questions regarding this condition, please don't hesitate to ask before you leave the office.