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CELLPHONE RASH: ALLERGIC TO YOUR PHONE?

If you're an incessant cellphone user and a mysterious rash appears along your jaw, cheek or ear, chances are you're allergic to nickel, a metal commonly used in cellphones.

While allergists have long been familiar with nickel allergy, "cellphone rash" is just starting to show up on their radar screen. Symptoms of cellphone allergy include a red, bumpy, itchy rash in areas where the nickel-containing parts of a cellphone touch the face. It can even affect fingertips of those who text continuously on buttons containing nickel. In severe cases, blisters and itchy sores can develop. Many patients who are allergic to nickel don't know it.

In 2000, a researcher in Italy documented the first case of cellphone rash, prompting other research on the condition. In a 2008 study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, U.S. researchers tested for nickel in 22 handsets from eight manufacturers; 10 contained the metal. The parts with the most nickel were the menu buttons, decorative logos on the headsets and the metal frames around the liquid crystal display (LCD) screens.

Cellphone rash is still not well known, said allergist Dr. Stanley M. Fineman, a clinical associate professor at the Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta. While he's treated more cases of nickel allergy caused



by piercings than by cellphones, "it's good for allergists and dermatologists to have cellphone contact dermatitis on their radar screens," he said.

Nickel allergy affects an estimated 17% of women and 3% of men. Women typically develop cellphone rash more often because they are more likely to have been sensitized to nickel after ear piercing, or had an allergic reaction to nickel-containing jewelry. If you get rashes from costume jewelry or the metal button on your jeans, you're probably nickel-sensitive.

Here are a few tips to avoid/reduce cellphone rash:

- **Try to keep the nickel-bearing parts of your phone off your face.**
- **Buy a phone cover; opt for a hands-free device.**
- **Use the speaker phone or switch to a phone that doesn't contain nickel on surfaces that touch your skin.**
- **Test the device for presence of nickel.**

It is easy to detect nickel with a spot-test kit before you buy a new phone. Put a drop of the **Nickel Alert™** on a cotton swab and dab the swab on those parts of the phone where nickel is typically found. If the applicator turns pink, the phone contains a significant amount of nickel.

You can protect yourself from nickel by coating metal objects with **Nickel Guard™**.



Visit www.allergycanada.com for details.



Allergy Canada carries an extensive line of nickel testing, nickel protection and nickel-free products. These products are certified to be free of all nickel, including the base metal, hardware and plating.