

Dog Tag Dermatitis and Nickel Allergy in the Military

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“DOG TAGS,” so called for their resemblance to identification tags worn by dogs, have been in issue with the US Military since 1906.¹ These identification tags are made of Monel or other adopted metal² and are intended to be worn by every service member in combat. In 1917, the Army began issuance of 2 tags, and in the event a service member was killed in action, 1 tag was removed for proper record keeping of the deceased.³ Of interest, the National Archives houses a letter from a New York businessman offering to make identification discs, the earliest form of dog tags, for the federal Army in 1862, which was shunned at the time.⁴

A search of the literature demonstrated no reported case of a patient reacting to the aluminum “dog tag.” And, although not reported, the number of service members reacting to the nickel lanyard became so commonplace that commanding officers made allowance for the option of providing a plastic-coated chain as part of standard military issuance. The plastic-coated chains can be found in most on-base military uniform shops or can be purchased online at www.armysurplusworld.com (Fig. 1).

PEARL

This case highlights the ubiquity of nickel dermatitis and a pearl for prevention of sensitization, coating lanyards.

REFERENCES

1. General Order Number 204. December 20, 1906.



Figure 1. Dermatitis to lanyard and protective coating, 285 × 212 mm (96 × 96 dpi).

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