

CONTACT POINTS

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Occupational contact dermatitis from propolis in a dental technician

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We describe propolis allergy in a dental technician from hand-moulding beeswax products in the manufacture of prosthetic components. Propolis allergy should be considered in dental technicians and we believe should be added to the standard series because of the increasing frequency of propolis allergy.

Case Report

A 26-year-old dental technician with a background history of atopic eczema presented with pulpitis, and fingertip and nail eczema localized to the right thumb and index finger. This had been going on for a number of years with a fluctuating course and no clear relationship to work patterns. He gave a history of contact to plaster of Paris among various other materials. His job involved the manufacture of dental moulds for reconstructive dentistry.

He was patch tested to the British standard (with added propolis 10%) and dental series. He had a positive allergic reaction to propolis 10% and a borderline reaction to bisphenol at day 4. The patient had never worked as a beekeeper or used any propolis containing cosmetics. However, the manufacturing process involved hand moulding of beeswax between the thumb and the index finger of his right hand (Fig. 1). We diagnosed allergic contact dermatitis secondary to occupational exposure to propolis.



Fig. 1. A dental technician moulding beeswax between the thumb and the index finger to manufacture a dental crown.

Propolis is rarely reported as an occupational cause of allergic contact dermatitis, the most frequent occupational reports being in beekeepers. Propolis allergy is not a recognized allergen in dental technicians; this may represent underdetection as it is not currently in the standard or dental series. In a non-occupational setting, propolis allergy is increasing because of its use in 'natural' cosmetic products.

Discussion

This is the first report to our knowledge of propolis allergy in a dental technician. Propolis is increasingly being recognized as an important allergen, with a rising prevalence from 0.5% to 1.4% over the past 10 years in Finland (1). In our centre, 3.5% of 684 patients tested reacted to propolis, of which only 1 patient reacted to both propolis 10% and beeswax. We suggest considering the addition of this allergen to the British standard series and testing for this allergen in dental technicians.

Reference

1. Hasan T, Rantanen T, Alanko K et al. Patch test reactions to cosmetic aller-

gens in 1995–1997 and 2000–2002 in Finland – a multicentre study. *Contact Dermatitis* 2005; 53: 40–45.

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