

Low-humidity dermatosis from car heaters

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Key words: low-humidity dermatosis; car heaters; hot air; men; lower legs. © Munksgaard, 1997.

Low humidity promotes pruritus and dermatitis in industrial settings where production takes place in dry environments, and in temperate climates where the skin tends to become dehydrated during the dry winter months (1, 2). As first pointed out by Rycroft (3), travelling salesmen whose car heaters blow warm air onto their legs are also affected.

From January 1992 to April 1997, we saw 10 patients with a distinct pattern of dermatitis on the lower legs. They presented with symmetrical, often annular, patches of pruritic dermatitis, usually on the anterior aspects of their lower legs (Fig. 1). Most patients had multiple lesions. A few had petechiae in the periphery of the lesions. No dermatophytes were found.

All the patients were middle-aged males (46 to 53

years, mean 49 years), and their dermatitis was most pronounced during the coldest months of the year (8 of the 10 were diagnosed in February and March). All spent a considerable amount of their time driving a car and drove an average of 45,000 km per year. All stated that, during the winter, hot air from their car heaters blew directly on their legs while they drove.

We have seen the same type of dermatitis in a road construction worker who drove a Caterpillar tractor during the winter, and who had hot air from the heater directed towards his legs throughout the working day. The dermatitis of all the patients faded after treatment with topical corticosteroids followed by emollients, and instructions to avoid hot air directed towards the legs while they drove.

It is possible that this dermatitis was seen only in men, because men more frequently have occupations requiring them to drive, and because men are less likely than women to routinely use emollients on their legs. It can be concluded that if middle-aged males in temperate climates develop pruritic annular dermatitis on their lower legs during the winter months, they should be asked how much time they spend driving with hot air blowing on their legs.



Fig. 1. Annular dermatitis on the lower leg.

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Dermatitis from chlorphenesin in a facial cosmetic

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A 43-year-old woman noticed burning discomfort within hours of using a new facial moisturizer. Within a day, she had developed a florid eczema at the sites of application. This settled after a week's treatment with topical hydrocortisone. She had a history of hay fever,

but no previous history of medicament or cosmetic intolerance.

Patch testing to the European standard series and a series of facial allergens was negative except for a + reaction to epoxy resin at D4, which was of unknown rel-

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