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Contact allergy to onion

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A 24-year-old housewife began helping in a restaurant more than 1 year ago. She makes what is called in this country "brochette". Her work consists of putting slices of meat and onion on metal pins. Since then she developed eczema of the hands. She denied ever having touched garlic. Patch tests with a standard tray

of contact allergens were all negative. A test with pieces of onion however showed erythema, edema and vesicles.

Subsequently we prepared water, ethanol and acetone extracts of onion and garlic, according to Bleumink et al. (1972). Results are shown in Table 1. They resemble the test results in the

Table 1. Patch tests with extracts of onion and garlic. Tests read after 48 h and reactions coded according to Wilkinson et al. (1970)

Onion aqueous extract	—
Onion aqueous extract boiled	—
Onion ethanol extract	—
Onion acetone extract	+
Garlic aqueous extract	++
Garlic aqueous extract boiled	++
Garlic ethanol extract	+
Garlic acetone extract	+

patient of Bleumink et al. (1972); the reactions were strong to garlic extracts but rather weak to onion extracts. However, while the patient of Bleumink et al. (1972) handled garlic, our patient touched only onion. The actual sensi-

tizer for our patient is in onion and not in garlic. This situation indicates a common or at least very similar allergen in onion and garlic. The concentration of the allergen is probably much higher in garlic than in onion.

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Absence of contact hypersensitivity to some perfume materials derived from Compositae species

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Contact hypersensitivity to the perfume material Costus Absolute derived from *Saussurea* (Compositae) probably results from its content of sesquiterpene lactones (SQL) (Mitchell & Epstein 1974). We have tested some other perfume materials which are derived from species of the Compositae family of plants in Compositae-SQL-sensitive individuals.

Materials

1. Natural essential oil of estragon (tarragon). The oil is derived from *Artemisia dracunculus* (Arctander 1960). Some *Artemisia* species yield sesquiterpene lactones (Yoshioka et al. 1973).
2. Natural essential oil of helichrysum. The oil is derived from *Helichrysum* species (Arctander 1960).

3. Absolute of calendula (marigold). The absolute is derived from *Calendula officinalis* (Arctander 1960).
4. Resinoid of arnica. The resinoid is derived from *Arnica montana*. This species yields a sesquiterpene lactone (Zakharov et al. 1971).
5. Oil of tagetes. The oil is derived from *Tagetes* species (Arctander 1960).

The materials were of commercial grade. No further quality control specifications are available. The materials were applied 1% in petrolatum to three individuals who are known to be contact-sensitive to numerous Compositae species and to their SQL; patch test findings in these individuals have previously been detailed as cases 1, 2 and 4 by Mitchell (1975). The three individuals showed 2+ patch test reac-

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