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Allergic contact dermatitis from propyl gallate in desonide cream (Locapred®)

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Relatively few cases of allergic contact dermatitis from propyl gallate (PG), an antioxidant, have been reported, and these mainly in cosmetics.

Case Report

A 59-year-old man presented with an acute lesion of his penis, with swelling, erythema and edema, after using Locapred® cream (desonide) for 2 days. He had previously used the same cream without adverse effects and had no personal history of atopy or contact dermatitis.

Patch tests produced positive reactions to neomycin and nickel in the European standard series, and to Locapred® cream and PG. Corticosteroids, preservatives and emulsifiers series were negative (Table 1).

Comment

PG has been used as an antioxidant and preservative since 1947 (1). It is commonly added to cosmetic products and food. Its primary function is to inhibit the oxidative deterioration of fats, vitamins, fragrances and essential oils (2). Although PG is regarded as a strong sensitizer, few cases of contact sensitivity have been reported and these more in cosmetics (lipstick, body lo-

tions) than in topical medicaments (3–6). Induced immunological tolerance from oral exposure and the low concentration of PG in the cosmetics have been suggested as an explanation of the relative lack of allergy despite its wide usage (1, 2, 7).

A considerable body of clinical research on corticosteroid allergy has been exhibited in the recent literature (8–11). Preservatives and emulsifiers are the compounds most commonly involved in contact allergy to topical corticosteroids. The antiinflammatory effect of corticosteroids usually masks allergic symptoms, and acute dermatitis or strong positive patch tests are rarely observed.

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Table 1. Patch test results

	D2	D4
European standard series:		
nickel	+++	+++
neomycin	+++	+++
others	–	–
corticosteroids series:		
budesonide	–	–
tixocortol pivalate	–	–
hydrocortisone-17-butyrate	–	–
Locapred®	+++	+++
Preservatives, emulsifiers:		
propyl gallate	+++	+++
others	–	–

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