

## Allergy to Cobalt

### What am I allergic to?

You have been found to be allergic to **Cobalt**.

### What is Cobalt?

Cobalt is a common metal to which the most frequent means of prolonged skin contact is in jewellery. Cobalt adds strength to alloys when used in combination with other metals such as nickel, chromium, tungsten and molybdenum. These alloys are used for many purposes (eg dental implants, artificial joints, jet engines).

### What must I avoid?

You should try to avoid any persistent contact with cobalt, especially in moist or sweaty conditions, such as keys held in hand or change in pockets. Objects that cannot be replaced with non-metal equivalents may be covered with waterproof tape, plastic film or clear nail varnish, but some penetration of the metal may still occur.

It is probably best to avoid vitamin B12 supplements or injections. Check cosmetics for the presence of cobalt by reading the ingredient label. Most patients allergic to cobalt are also allergic to nickel (particularly women) and some are also allergic to chromate (particularly men).

### Where can Cobalt be found?

Sources include:

- Earrings, chains, body-piercing jewellery, watches, spectacles, lighters
- Zips, studs, hooks-and-eyes, metal toe-caps, metal buttons
- Coins and keys
- Utensils and tools including scissors, thimbles, needles, cutlery
- Pacemakers, metal plates on bones, cautery plates
- Dental appliances (eg braces and instruments)
- Metal parts of furniture, door handles, prams
- Machinery parts
- Hard metals (eg engraved glass, etching, tool-making)
- Paint, cement and resins
- Polyester resin manufacture (cobalt naphthalate)
- Drying agent in printing inks
- Hair dye
- Blue pigment in porcelain, glass, pottery, enamels, crayons
- Pigment in cosmetic
- Chemical fertilisers
- Animal feeds
- Cyanocobalamin (Vitamin B12)

This list is not exhaustive.

Dermatology

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