

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WARNS PUBLIC OF POTENTIAL SKIN DAMAGE FROM TEMPORARY “BLACK HENNA” TATTOOS

TALLAHASSEE – As families prepare for summer vacations to Florida’s resort areas, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) warns individuals to consider potential health risks before having a temporary “black henna” tattoo applied to their skin. Last year, DOH received reports of 24 individuals, both children and adults, who had a severe allergic reaction from a temporary “black henna” tattoo they had applied while vacationing in Florida. Other incidents may not have been reported to the department due to the time lapse between application of the tattoo and presentation of symptoms.

DOH warns that there is no such thing as “black henna”. True henna is made from crushed henna leaves, producing a green or greenish-brown powder, which is mixed with harmless liquids, such as oil and lemon juice, before application to the skin. The green or greenish-brown paste may be applied free hand or by tracing over a stencil with an applicator or brush. No needle is involved. The paste, if left on for a number of hours or overnight before removal, leaves a brown or reddish brown finished tattoo.

“Black henna” tattoos have become popular in recent years, particularly in resort areas of Florida. The paste that is used for a “black henna” tattoo is black or brownish-black and dries more quickly than pure henna. The dried paste can be removed in approximately an hour, leaving a black finished tattoo. The danger of temporary “black henna” tattoos is that the black color may result from the addition of black hair dye, which may contain a recognized allergen called para-phenylenediamine (PPD). PPD can cause severe allergic reactions in some individuals.

Seek medical attention immediately if you experience symptoms of an allergic reaction. The general progression of symptoms includes itching or burning, blistering, oozing, scab formation, and, in some cases, permanent scarring. Symptoms may occur within a few hours or up to a few weeks, depending upon the concentration of PPD in the paste and how allergic a person is.

In addition to immediate medical attention, allergic reactions should be reported electronically to DOH on the Injury Report Form found on website at www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/community/Black_Henna/index.htm

Before having a temporary “black henna” tattoo applied to your skin or your child’s skin:

- Check the color of the paste, which should be a green or greenish-brown
- Ask to see the ingredients, which should be henna leaves, oil or lemon juice
- Ask how long you must wait before removing the dried paste



Pure henna

Black henna

Allergic reaction

DOH promotes, protects and improves the health of all people in Florida. For more information about DOH programs, visit www.doh.state.fl.us.