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**THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WARNS OF POTENTIAL SKIN DAMAGE  
FROM TEMPORARY "BLACK HENNA" TATTOOS**

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) warns students of potential health risks from having a temporary "black henna" tattoo applied to their skin. This issue is especially important as more than 250,000 students are expected to hit Florida beaches for 2009 "Spring Break" which extends from mid February to mid April. Last year, DOH received 17 reports of severe allergic reactions to temporary black henna tattoos applied in one of Florida's beach communities.

"Black henna" tattoos have become popular in recent years because they look more like a "real" tattoo. In reality, there is no such thing as "black henna". True henna paste is green or greenish brown and must remain on the skin eight hours or overnight to leave a brown or reddish-brown design. The paste for a "black henna" tattoo is black or brownish-black and can be removed in one hour or less to leave a black design.

The danger of "black henna" tattoos is that the black color may be a result of the addition of black hair dye, which may contain a toxic chemical called para-phenylenediamine (PPD). PPD can cause severe allergic reactions in some individuals. The general progression of symptoms is itching or burning, blistering, oozing, scab formation, and sometimes permanent scarring in the shape of the tattoo design. 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.

Medical attention should be sought immediately upon any symptoms of an allergic reaction. In addition to medical attention, allergic reactions should be reported electronically to DOH on the Injury Report Form found on the department website at [www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/community/Black\\_Henna/index.htm](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/community/Black_Henna/index.htm).

**Temporary tattoo hints include:**

- Ensure the paste is green or greenish-brown.
- Ask to see the ingredients, which should be ground henna leaves, lemon or grapefruit juice, and possibly botanical oil.
- Ask how long the paste should stay on skin. The answer should be eight hours to overnight.

Photos showing allergic reactions to "black henna":



DOH promotes, protects and improves the health of all people in Florida. For more information about DOH programs, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us).

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