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Temporary Tattoos Have Risks

Tattoos are popular. Kids want them. Many parents believe temporary tattoos to be safe. They think they are a great substitute to regular ink-injected tattoos. They only last a few days to a few weeks. However, doctors warn parents. Temporary tattoos can cause serious health problems when applied to the skin.

For centuries, pure henna has been a tattoo dye. Henna is a tropical flowering plant product. It produces a brown, orange/brown and reddish-brown tint. It is sometimes called mehndi. Tattoo artists around the world still use pure henna.

However, many "artists" mix the henna with other additives. These additives may cause the henna to change colors, stain quicker, look darker and last longer. These *additives* pose health risks.

"Black henna" is very popular. Black henna is not pure henna. It may be a mix of henna with other ingredients. It may also be hair dye without henna. The dye used in black henna is often a coal-tar dye called PPD. The law prohibits the use of PPD in cosmetics. However, tattoo artists apply it to the skin for a black tattoo.

PPD can cause dangerous skin reactions in some people.

These reactions can occur right away. Some reactions occur several weeks after the dye has been applied. Reported reactions include:

- Redness,
- Blisters,
- Loss of pigmentation,
- Raised, red weeping lesions,
- Increased sensitivity to sunlight, and
- Permanent scars.

"Artists" may add other ingredients to the tattoo dyes. Additives include:

- Aromatherapy essential oils. These can cause allergic skin reactions.
- Camphor. This may cause nausea or dizziness.
- Citrus oils. They can cause allergic skin reactions.
- Walnut powder. This is very dangerous or deadly for a person with a nut allergy.

Temporary tattoos like black henna are often sold in kiosks at fairs, beaches and malls. If your teen wants a temporary tattoo, she should ask the tattoo artist about the ink or dye. Know the ingredients.

If you have a reaction to a tattoo, contact the FDA. For general inquiries call 1-888-463-6332. For emergencies call 301-796-8240 or 1-866-300-4374.

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