



The European nickel legislation – should Australia follow?

Nickel is the most common cause of contact allergy. The overall prevalence of contact allergy in the general population is approximately 2.0% to 8.1%. The European Union introduced the Nickel Directive to control nickel content and release from consumer items, which was passed on June 30th, 1994 and came into full effect in June 2001. Since June 2009, the EU Nickel Directive was included in the REACH (registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction of chemicals) regulation.

The US market remains unregulated as does Australia and the incidence of nickel allergic contact dermatitis is increasing.

The EU Nickel Directive has changed the epidemiology of nickel allergy in Europe. Nickel regulations and legislations should be uniform throughout the world and should be introduced in Australia to provide a decrease in the overall nickel contact and nickel release from consumer items. This will protect those exposed to such items from nickel allergy, which can have long-term and debilitating effects.

