



PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET: cobalt

Your patch test shows that you have a contact allergy to: cobalt

Synonym(s): Co

Definition: Cobalt is a lustrous, bluish-grey, hard metal used in various fields of daily life and industry.

Use and occurrence:

Cobalt is a frequent addition to alloys, like stainless steel, which is widely used in industry (including so-called high-speed steel for metalworking tools). Cobalt may be present in, and released from, surgical instruments, orthopaedic prostheses, dental implants and prostheses, endovascular stents and coils used for closing aneurysms, as well as other medical devices. Piercings used for body modification may also be made of cobalt alloys. Alnico (aluminium-nickel-cobalt) alloys are used to produce strong magnets used in various branches of industry and daily objects, e.g. magnetic locks, loudspeakers, musical equipment and many others. Cobalt salts are used as pigments in glass and china staining and painting. Some tattoo inks may contain cobalt. A release of Co from metallic objects can be detected using a commercially available spot test.

Cobalt compounds may be used as blue cosmetic dyes in eyeshadows, hair dyes, mascaras, and antiperspirants. Cobalt titanium oxide and cobalt gluconate are conditioning ingredients added to various cosmetics, including mascaras, eyeshadows, and corrective foundations. Cobalt DNA is used in cosmetics as humectant, skin conditioner, and a UV absorber. The presence of cobalt in cosmetics is not always obvious – according to the INCI nomenclature of cosmetics ingredients dyes are declared under colour index (CI) number. Cosmetic ingredients containing cobalt include, for example, CI 77332 (CI Pigment Black 25; cobalt nickel dioxide).

Cobalt may also be present in leather consumer items, such as shoes, belts, watchstraps and sofas.

Remarks:

Airborne cobalt particles (e.g. in metal industry), as well as cobalt compounds dispersed in the air in the form of aerosols or vapours (e.g. in laboratories) may cause airborne dermatitis. Cobalt allergy may sometimes provoke erythema multiforme-like skin lesions.

Disclaimer: Always check your products as these lists can never be complete and ingredients change.