

Metal allergies common yet hard to diagnose

Metal allergies are more common than most people realise, but they are among the hardest to diagnose.

Dr Cathy van Rooyen, an allergy specialist from Pretoria, says that white lesions in the mouth, a swollen face and rash around the mouth or any part of the body are the most common symptoms of metal allergy.

"If you experience such reactions, especially after coming into contact with metals through exposure in the workplace or by wearing certain jewellery, then you have a metal allergy," says Dr van Rooyen.

Many women are allergic to nickel and react to it if the gold plating on their jewellery is flawed. Dental amalgam fillings and seafood, like tuna, are also common sources of metal exposure in everyday life.

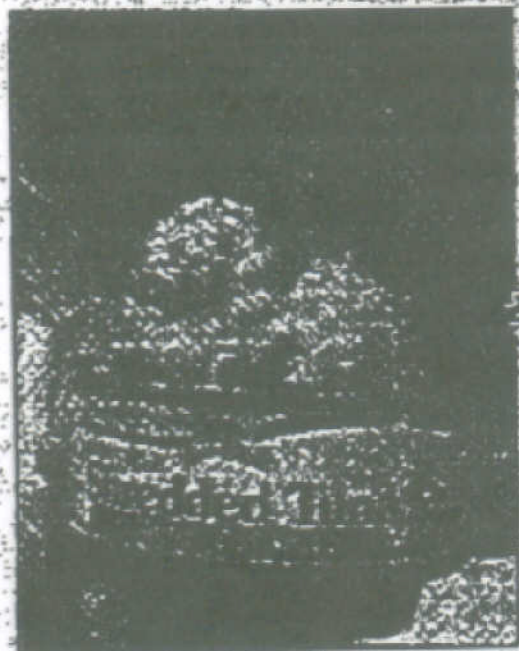
Tuna is a healthy eating option but many cans of tuna contain mercury.

Dr van Rooyen advises anyone who is concerned that they may have a metal allergy to visit

their general practitioner.

A new test called the Melisa test is now available in South Africa at a research laboratory, which makes it easier to diagnose metal allergies.

"The patient simply supplies a blood sample, which is analysed and within six days the doctor and patient will have the results," she says.



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