

Fake Tattoos Carry their Own Health Risks, FDA Warns

By: L.J. Devon, Natural News

Most people in industrialized society consider a real tattoo to be an ink-based, permanent etch. The art of modern day tattooing has evolved into full body displays and personally meaningful symbols, intricately displayed almost anywhere on the body. As this body art becomes more popular, it carries its own health risks. In the past, the FDA has warned against infections stemming from contaminated ink.

Now, the FDA is beginning to warn consumers about new and popular brands of contaminated tattoos. These temporary "fake" tattoos coming under the spotlight include altered jagua-based dyes and tainted "black henna"-based paints.

Jagua-based tattoos are relatively new to the US. Derived from the unripened fruit of a South American tree, the *Genipa americana*, jagua tattoos are used by the indigenous people in the Amazon for elaborate body decorations. In the US, the fruit-based dye can become mixed with other chemicals, ultimately causing skin reactions or sun sensitivities.

However, the most concerning fake tattoos to the FDA are tainted henna-based concoctions that are laced with hair dye chemicals. These gimmick tattoos may leave children with lifelong scarring or fluid filled blisters.

"Black henna" tattoos tainted with hair dye chemicals, pose serious health risks

Henna, made from the dried leaves of the *Lawsonia* plant, is an ancient "natural paint" used to decorate the hands and feet of Indian and Pakistani brides. In the US, henna may be altered and tainted by chemical hair dye ingredients. The most commonly used contaminate is p-phenylenediamine, which gives the henna design a black or bluish black color.

Henna, which is naturally reddish brown, comes from the tropical and subtropical regions of Africa and Asia. For centuries, henna has been cultivated, ground down into a paste and applied to leather, silk and wool as well as skin, hair and nails. Often called *mehndi*, henna is still used today in cultural festivals around the world. In some markets, henna may be mixed with hair dye chemicals to make it darker and last longer. These "black henna" products are potentially harmful and may cause allergic reactions. Tainted henna products are often used at tattoo kiosks on beaches or at specialty shops at tourist destinations.

Skin redness, fluid-filled blisters and scarring for life

On May 13, 2014, the FDA held a seminar to address the issue of tainted henna tattoos. Katherine Hollinger, an epidemiologist with the FDA Office of Cosmetics and Colors is calling on consumers to report allergic reactions coming from fake tattoos. "If you had a reaction to a temporary tattoo or any cosmetic product, the FDA wants to know," she said.

Open to public comment, the FDA has already gathered reports of allergic reactions coming from tainted tattoos.

In one case, a five-year-old girl developed severe redness on her forearm two weeks after having a black henna tattoo applied. "What we thought would be a little harmless fun ended up becoming more like a nightmare for us," the father says. "My hope is that by telling people about our experience, I can help prevent this from happening to some other unsuspecting kids and parents."

In another incident, a 17-year-old girl had a black henna tattoo applied that later became red and itchy, leading to fluid-filled blisters.

For one mother, she recalls seeing her daughter's back as looking "the way a burn victim looks, all blistered and raw." According to the family doctor, **the girl may have scarring for life all because of a fake henna tattoo.**

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.foxnews.com>

<http://www.fda.gov>