



Case Report

**FAIRLY USED CLOTHES UNDERGARMENT AS A SOURCE OF DERMATITIS:
A CASE REPORT****Dr. Buowari Yvonne Omiepirisa, MBBS**

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e-mail: dabotabuowari@yahoo.com. **Tel.:** +234-8037324401**Abstract**

Introduction: Fairly used clothes also known as "second hand" is commonly used in Nigeria. These clothes including undergarments are brought into the country from developed countries. It is widely used as some people believe that they last longer and are more durable than locally made clothes and undergarments including underwear and pants but they can be vehicles for transmission of skin infections.

Case summary: A fifty year old woman had rashes which were itchy, tender and bled on scratching. It commenced following wearing of fairly used brassieres. The patient was restless and unable to sleep at night. She had taken several medications but the condition stopped when she soaked and washed all the undergarments in disinfectant. The rashes then disappeared.

Conclusion: Fairly used garments can cause dermatitis.

Key words: Clothes, Skin, Dermatitis, Fairly Used.

Introduction

There is a huge trade in second-hand clothes donated in Western Europe and North America and exported to developing countries. Yet little is known about its impact in developing countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, used clothing imports have taken place for some time.

Dermatitis means inflammation of the skin. Clothing can be a cause of dermatitis. Allergic contact dermatitis is caused by the body's reaction to something that directly contacts the skin. Dermatitis from clothing can be obvious or hard to detect. Contact dermatitis encompasses all adverse cutaneous reactions that result from the direct contact of an exogenous agent¹.

Fairly used clothes are commonly also known as "second hand", "bend down boutique" or "bend down select". These clothes also include undergarments which have been used in developed countries and are shipped to developing countries by charity organizations

and other individuals for charity and profit making. Fairly used goods do carry a few health risks such as infestations from scabies, mites, lice and fungi while many of these germs can survive away from a human host. Ringworms remain contagious for a much longer period. A case of dermatitis from wearing fairly used brassier is presented.

Case presentation

A 50 year old woman presented at a Nigerian district hospital with complaints of itching, rashes and redness of the breast, scaly flakes on the chest for one year duration. She had same symptoms since one year when she purchased fairly used brassieres and had taken several antifungal medications. The itching was intense and sometimes bled when she scratched it. The itching was worse along the areas where the elastic part of the brassiere made contact with her skin. The itching made her to be restless, not able to sleep well at night and unable to attend

public functions and occasions. There was no history of allergy.

On examination there was hyperaemic area on the breast and immediately underneath the breast with crusty tender areas and flakes. There were no other rashes on other parts of the body. She was placed on antifungal agents, haematinics. She was advised to wash all her brassieres especially the fairly used ones in disinfectant before using them again. She was also counselled to wash any fairly used undergarments she purchased before using them if she could not afford brand new ones. There was improvement in symptoms after she disinfected her undergarments.

Figure 1. Rashes and scaly flakes on the chest where the brassier made contact with the patient's skin.



Discussion

The skin is the largest organ in the human body. It is also very sensitive to disease and injury. One of the main risks to the skin is dermatitis. Contact dermatitis is a common inflammatory skin condition characterised by erythematous and pruritic skin lesions that occur after contact with a foreign substance². The dermatitis may worsen with constant rubbing by the fabric against the skin. In some situations the rash can become

secondarily infected with yeast or bacterial organism. Contaminated clothing can result in skin rashes. The fairly used brassiere had been worn by a lady who the patient did not know nor did she know if the person had any form of skin rash or contagious disease. The person who wore the brassiere initially might have a fungal rash. Fungi can survive for long periods outside the human body. The rash was distributed evenly on both breasts which made it unlikely to be Paget's disease of the breast.

There was no dermatologist at the hospital where the patient was managed and no facilities for dermatological investigations. Areas of affected skin may be red, swollen, tender, hot and painful or itchy as seen in this patient. Scratching or rubbing as a result of itch from dermatitis can make the symptoms worse. Contaminated clothing can result in skin rashes. The areas involved are subjected to friction and perspiration, which contribute to the uncomfortable skin lesions. The clothes are made in different parts of the world, kept in boxes, passed through many hands before they are then purchased. They can easily be infested with parasites. There is need for further investigations³.

Conclusion

Without proper cleaning and washing, fairly used undergarments can spread diseases. There is need for research on fairly used undergarments especially pants causing venereal diseases and sexually transmitted diseases.

References

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