



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Temporary 'black henna' tattoos may cause skin damage, ADPH cautions

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health asks the public to be aware of the risks involved with getting "temporary" black henna tattoos, because allergic reactions and injuries can result. Black henna tattoos are popular with children, teens and others, and may be available at coastal beach shops and through other vendors.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not approve henna for direct application to the skin. Henna, a coloring made from a plant, is approved only for use as a hair dye. Since henna typically produces a brown or orange-brown tint, other ingredients must be added to produce other colors, such as those marketed as black henna. This so-called black henna may contain coal tar color p-phenylenediamine, also known as PPD. This ingredient may cause mild to serious allergic reactions in some individuals when it is applied directly to the skin.

"A natural plant dye called henna or mehendi is used to stain the skin without the use of needles," said environmental supervisor Tim Hatch of the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Consumers are cautioned to be aware of the risks associated with henna tattoos in general, and of black henna tattoos in particular. For more information or to report possible reactions to black henna tattoos, visit [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).

This recommendation is not associated with "decal" type of tattoos that are applied to the skin with a moistened cotton ball. This type of tattoo fades several days after application.

Hatch added, "Tattooing is a regulated practice in Alabama. If individuals elect to be tattooed, we advise them to seek a body art facility which has a current, valid license. No tattoos may be performed on a minor in Alabama without the written, informed consent of the parent or legal guardian."

Tattooing is defined as placing an indelible mark upon the body through the insertion of pigment. Since henna application does not puncture the skin, it is not defined as a tattoo and therefore is not regulated by the state of Alabama. However, the public should be aware of the potential risks and complications of black henna.

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