



Is Black Henna permissible for a woman to use on her body in order to beautify herself?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

In order to determine the Islamic legality of any product one has to determine the ingredients and base the ruling on those findings.

There seems to be two types of Black Henna; a natural form of black henna called Indigoferae¹ and a synthetic form. The natural form of black henna seems to be utilised in hair products exclusively and the synthetic form finds majority of its uses in body tattoos. However, synthetic 'black henna' is a mixture of a number of ingredients. As the natural colour for henna is orange-brown or red-brown for it to become black other ingredients must be added; these are usually dyes. One ingredient which is suspected to be added for the dark colour is p-Phenylenediamine (PPD) which is a dye and only medically permitted to be used on hair; in extreme cases black henna is solely PPD. This chemical can cause an allergic reaction with some individuals and as a result when used in hair dyes it is clearly labelled that a small patch test should be carried out to determine compatibility with the product. The allergic reaction can cause serious rashes, scars and in extreme cases death. In some cases the reaction does not take place immediately but can occur when the person uses another product with contains PPD like for example hair dye. The US FDA has not approved the use of back henna due to its serious safety concerns². The UK's MHRA based on EU regulations has a similar position but the author was unable to locate official documentation, however the Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association (CTPA)³ has declared as such whilst discussing the dangerous effects of black henna.

¹Kew Royal Botanical Gardens, 2004, Indigoferae, Available at <http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/research-data/resources/legumes-of-the-world/tribe/indigoferae> Accessed on 10th May 2015

²U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2014, Temporary Tattoos, Henna/Mehndi and "Black Henna", Available at <http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ProductsIngredients/Products/ucm108569.htm#henna> Accessed on 10th May 2015

³CTPA, 2015, Black Henna Temporary Tattoos, Available at <http://www.thefactsabout.co.uk/black-henna-temporary-tattoos/content/203> Accessed on 10th May 2015



One other area which requires discussion is that does the black henna coat the skin or react with the skin. In order to understand that we need to look at how dyes affect the hair. Dyes which are permanent actually react with the hair as a leading dye specialist explains the science and states the permanent dye works, 'by penetrating each hair cuticle, entering the hair cortex and bonding with the hair.'⁴ Semi-permanent and non-permanent hair dye coats the hair and as a result does not allow water to reach the hair, however as the name suggests, does wash out hence if enough water is used ritual bathing and ablution may be successfully achieved, but it does carry the risk that it may not be achieved. In terms of its use on the body there is clearly a reaction between the product and the skin, but it is not possible to know whether it acts as a coating or not; however that is academic due its potential serious health consequences when it is applied to the skin.

In conclusion, black henna is considered as illegal by both the US and EU cosmetic regulators due to the potential serious health implications of its unauthorised use on the body using chemicals only approved in hair dye. Based on these findings it would not be permissible to use black henna due to the risk of serious damage and possibility of death for little cosmetic gains which can be achieved by other regulated and approved cosmetics.

والله اعلم وعلمه احكم واتم

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⁴ Clairol, 2014, How Hair Color Works – The Science of Hair Color Available at <http://www.clairol.com/en-US/how-it-works-page.aspx?categoryId=3296&articleId=3272> Accessed on 10th May 2015