

LATEX ALLERGY

Latex is the milky sap from the rubber tree.

WHAT ARE LATEX ALLERGIES?

A latex allergy is an allergy to proteins found in products made from natural rubber latex, which also contain many chemicals. Some patients are not allergic to the latex protein itself, but to the chemicals in the manufactured product.

WHO IS AT HIGH RISK FOR LATEX ALLERGY?

- Children with spina bifida need many surgical procedures and catheterizations. The risk for latex allergy is so high that they should avoid latex products entirely to avoid becoming allergic.
- Anyone who wears latex gloves regularly.
- People who have undergone repeated surgery for any reason.
- People with other allergies.
- People with eczema on their hands are at greater risk of becoming sensitized through repeated wearing of gloves.
- Rubber industry workers.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Latex allergies often begin with a rash on the hands when using latex gloves. Other allergic symptoms include hay fever type reactions such as itchy swollen eyes, runny nose and sneezing. The allergy can also result in respiratory distress, eczema or edema. Some patients may develop asthma symptoms such as chest tightness, wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath.

Life threatening reactions can result from some exposures, including:

1. catheters for x-ray examination of the bowel (barium enema)
2. catheters to drain urine from the bladder
3. surgical procedures performed on a person who is allergic to latex where latex gloves are worn by the operating room personnel
4. presence in a room where many latex gloves are being used

AVOIDANCE ADVICE

-Non-latex gloves cost more than latex gloves. You could carry your own non-latex gloves for possible emergencies.

-You should wear a Medic-Alert bracelet warning of your latex allergy.

There are no latex-free condoms that satisfactorily prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.

-You must notify all doctors and other health care personnel that you encounter, of your allergy to latex. Non-latex gloves and equipment such as catheters, dental dams, face masks, intubation tubes and intravenous tubing without latex injection ports should be used.

-If you are scheduled for surgery, CAREFUL PLANNING is required to entirely avoid latex exposure. For example, for severe allergy everyone in the room should use non-latex gloves. Latex gloves can send enough powder into the air to cause a reaction.

-If you have had a life-threatening response to latex, you should carry emergency adrenalin. Ask your allergist if this is necessary.

Your doctor may recommend avoiding certain foods like avocados, bananas and water chestnuts. There are reports that some people with latex allergies may also be allergic to these foods.

THE FOLLOWING IS A PARTIAL LIST OF LATEX CONTAINING PRODUCTS

Surgical gloves, household gloves, rubber toys, rubber infant pacifiers (soothers), dental dams, anaesthesia products such as intubation tubes and face masks, urinary and rectal catheters, rubber boots, elastic bands, balloons, condoms, foam rubber, erasers, diaphragms, elastoplast bandages, Pritt glue stick, the grip on tennis and /or squash racquets, elastic threads and adhesives. "Latex" paint and caulking material don't seem to contain latex.

EXAMPLES OF NON-LATEX PRODUCTS

Gloves: • Dispos-a-glove
 • Elastyren
 • Tactylon, Neolon

Intubation Tubes: • Malincroft latex-free

Catheters: • Bard
 • Silicone
 • Polyvinyl-chloride