



EH&S FACT Sheet

Latex Allergy

What is Latex?

Latex is a substance found in a tropical rubber tree. It is commonly used in a wide variety of products, from balloons and gloves, to pacifiers and rubber bands.

Furthermore, many medical and dental supplies contain latex. Non-latex substitutes can be found for all of these items containing latex.

Symptoms of a Latex allergy

Although latex allergies are not common, reactions after an exposure may range from mild to severe. Symptoms of an adverse reaction to latex include:

- Itchy, watery eyes
- Coughing, sneezing, or runny nose
- Rash or hives
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or wheezing
- Dizziness or confusion
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid or weak pulse
- Loss of consciousness
- Anaphylactic shock

Who is at risk?

Latex products are used everywhere, and people can develop a latex allergy after having used these products for years. Health care workers and rubber industry workers are at the highest risk for developing a latex allergy since they are constantly using latex products.

Treating a Latex allergy

Awareness is the first step in treating a latex allergy. Once diagnosed with the allergy, a doctor may prescribe an antihistamine for mild cases, or epinephrine to carry with you in case of a more severe reaction. Also, your doctor may recommend wearing a medical bracelet to alert others of your allergy.

Preventing an allergic reaction to Latex

The best way to prevent any type of allergic reaction to latex is to avoid all direct contact with latex products or equipment. Latex allergy problems can be prevented in medical environments or in the workplace simply by advocating in advance about your allergy problem. Steps should then be taken to remove the latex from your environment or use non-latex substitutes. **Preplanning and advocating your allergy issue is critical for a successful outcome when living with an allergy.** If you need assistance, contact EH&S, Health Services, or Disability Services for further advice.

Event Organizers and Departments

- Consider using alternatives to latex gloves such as nitrile gloves
- Consider using Mylar balloons instead of latex balloons
- Consider placing any latex balloons away from entrances, exits and on all tables at a function



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