

Latex Allergy

Commonly called NRL - Natural Rubber Latex

Natural rubber latex is a processed plant product derived from the milky sap of the *Hevea Braziliensis* tree (Brazilian rubber tree). The tree can be found in Africa and Southeast Asia. NRL is a strong, flexible and tear resistance substance. It is used in many household items and in medical supplies. Some materials may be referred to as "latex" but they do not contain the protein that produces latex allergy (example: latex paint)

Latex allergy is a fairly new problem in the USA; it was first recognized in the late 1970's. If someone is allergic to latex that means their body's immune system is responding to the proteins in natural latex rubber or to the additives used in processing it. This causes the body to release substances such as histamine and other chemicals, therefore causing a reaction. Reactions to latex can range from a very mild skin rash to anaphylaxis.

TYPES OF LATEX REACTIONS

There are three (3) types of reactions that occur in people exposed to products containing latex.

Irritant Contact Dermatitis

This is not an allergic reaction. It is the result of damage to the skin. It is the most commonly associated with exposure to latex gloves. These reactions do not involve the immune system. They are due to sweating, rubbing, occlusion, repeated hand washing, detergents, scrubbing agents, chemicals or powders left on the hands. Irritant contact dermatitis usually fades if exposure is discontinued.

Type 4 - Allergic Contact Dermatitis

This is a delayed reaction and is usually localized. It is often caused by the chemicals added to latex not the latex itself. Chemicals are added to make the gloves have a longer shelf life and to make them more durable and elastic. The onset is 24 to 48 hours after exposure, and symptoms may peak days later. This is not a life threatening reaction.

Type 1 Latex Allergy - immediate hypersensitivity

This is an immediate reaction to latex. It usually occurs at the site of contact, although rare, it can be generalized and may develop into life threatening anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis can occur without any warning.

Some things you should do if you have been told you have Type 1 Latex Allergy:

1. Carry an EpiPen and know how to use it.
2. Have an emergency plan.

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3. Educate yourself on the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis.
4. Wear a medic alert bracelet.
5. Contact your local EMS and find out if they are equipped with latex-free products.
6. Consider carrying an Emergency Bag with latex-free medical supplies.
7. Inform necessary people of your allergy (family, friends, coworkers, doctors, EMT's, hospitals, clergy, etc.)
8. Have lists of "Latex Containing" products so you know what to avoid.
9. Have "Latex Free" lists so you know what products are safe to use

Resources

A.L.E.R.T. (American Latex Allergy Association)

P.O. Box 13930

Milwaukee, WI 53213-0930

Phone: 888-972-5378

Fax: 262-677-2808

[E-mail: alert@execpc.com](mailto:alert@execpc.com)

Web site: www.latexallergyresources.org

AAAAI (American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology)

611 Wells Street

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Phone: 414-272-6701

Fax: 414-272-6070

Physician Referral: 800-822-2762

Web site: www.aaaai.org

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network

10400 Eaton Place, Suite 107

Fairfax, VA 22030-2208

Phone: 800-929-4040

Fax: 703-691-2713

Web site: www.foodallergy.org

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Medical Sources of Latex

Adhesive Tape	Finger Cots
Anesthesia Mask	GI Tubes
Bite Blocks	Gloves
Blood Pressure Cuffs	Hot Water Bottles
Breathing Bags/Masks	Heparin Locks
Catheters	Implants
Dental Devices	Multiple Dose Medication Files
Disposable Syringes with Rubber Stoppers	Prophy Cups
Drains	Protective Sheets
Elastic Bandages	Rubber Pads or Sheeting
Electrode Pads	Stethoscope Tubing
Endo Tubes	Tourniquets
Enema Tips	Ultrasound Covers
Eye Dropper Bulbs	Urine Bags and Straps
	Ventilator Bellows & Tubing
	Warming Blankets
	Wheelchair Tires

House Hold Sources of Latex Exposure

Adhesive Strips	Rubber Cement
Balloons	Erasers
Bathing Suites	Stretch Socks
Bicycle Shorts	Swimming Cap/Goggle/Mask
Condoms	Toys
Contraceptives, Diagrams, and Sponges	Pacifiers
Dishwashing Gloves	Sports Equipment
Elastic Bandages	Teething Rings
Hot Water Bottles	Nipples
Rubber Bands	Shoe Soles
Rubber Pants	Mouth Guard

Latex Product Safe Alternative

Balloons	.....Mylar Balloons
Baby bath toys	.....Plastic or cloth toys
Belts for clothing	.....Leather or cloth belts
Condoms	.....Sheep cecun condoms
Crib mattress pads	.....Heavy cotton pads
Elastic bands	.....Paper clips or twine
Feeding nipples	.....Silicone nipples
Household gloves	.....Cotton or synthetic glove
Halloween rubber masks	.....Plastic or water based paints
Rubber boots	.....Clear vinyl rubbers
Raincoat or slicker	.....Nylon or synthetic coats
Sneakers	.....Leather shoes
Swim Fins/goggles	.....Clear plastic fins/goggles
Tooth massagers	.....Soft brushes