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.
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
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
## Medical Sources of Latex

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

## House Hold Sources of Latex Exposure

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