

## Latex Allergy Awareness

This fact sheet is designed to provide students with an overview of **latex allergy**, and how to limit exposure to latex products

### What is a Latex Allergy?

Latex allergy is a reaction that results from repeated exposures to proteins contained in natural rubber latex through skin contact or inhalation. Reactions can occur within minutes to hours following an exposure and produce varying symptoms.

### Incidence and High-Risk Populations

Those susceptible to latex allergy include physicians, nurses, paramedics, EMT's, firefighters, food service workers, painters, gardeners, and funeral home employees. *An estimated 10 to 12% of regularly exposed healthcare workers are sensitized to latex allergy!* Patients with history of spina bifida, spinal cord injury, multiple surgeries, eczema, and fruit allergies are also at risk for developing latex sensitivity.

### Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms vary from a mild, local reactions (hives, rhinitis) to a more serious, systemic reaction such as anaphylaxis (hypotension, tachycardia, bronchospasm).

#### WHAT HAS LATEX?

MEDICAL SUPPLIES				
BP CUFFS	MASKS	STETHOSCOPES	AIRWAYS	TOPS OF MULTI-DOSE VIALS
TOURNIQUETS	IV TUBING	SYRINGES	ECG LEADS	FOLEY CATHETERS
GLOVES	GOGGLES	GOWNS	SUCTION TUBING	WOUND DRAINS
OTHER SUPPLIES				
RUBBER BANDS	ERASERS	TIRES	WAISTBANDS	CONDOMS
MOTORCYCLE GRIPS	BABY BOTTLE NIPPLES	CARPETING	HOT WATER BOTTLE	SWIMMING GOGGLES
SHOES	BALLOONS	PACIFIERS	PAINT	GARDEN HOSES

**IF IT IS RED, BLACK, OR TAN, IF IT STRETCHES AND SNAPS BACK, IT PROBABLY CONTAINS LATEX!**

#### Routes of Exposure to Latex

Patients and healthcare workers can be exposed to latex in one of two ways during a normal patient care situation: direct contact and inhalation. *Direct skin* contact occurs when the skin contacts the latex product through gloves, tourniquets, blood pressure cuff tubing, etc. *Inhalation*

occurs when a healthcare provider removes a latex glove, especially a powdered glove. Latex particles become airborne and are inhaled.

### Reactions to Latex

REACTION	SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS	INFORMATION
Irritant contact dermatitis	Dry, itchy, irritated skin	Not a true allergy
Chemical sensitivity dermatitis	Rash, oozing blisters– similar to poison ivy	Develops after 24– 48 hours
Latex Allergy	Ranges from itchy skin, redness, and hives to full anaphylaxis	May occur immediately after exposure or maybe delayed minutes to hours

### Reduce Your Risk of Developing A Latex Allergy

If you develop problems avoid contact with latex products, and wear a medic Anyone in frequent contact with latex is at risk for developing an allergy to latex. This includes medical products containing latex, as well as latex gloves. To reduce the chance of allergy:

- Use powder-free gloves.
- Do not use oil-based hand creams or lotions with latex gloves. These may cause glove deterioration.
- Wash hands with a mild soap after glove removal.
- Dry hands thoroughly after washing.
- Practice good housekeeping to reduce latex dust in work areas.
- Recognize the signs of early latex sensitivity (Itchy, red skin; sinus, eye problems)
- alert bracelet.