



# Latex Allergy

If the glove fits it still may make you itch!

## Latex Allergy A Prevention Guide

*Latex gloves have proved effective in preventing transmission of many infectious diseases to health care workers. But for some workers, exposures to latex may result in allergic reactions.* [.html](#). Reports of such reactions have increased in recent years especially among health care workers.

### What is latex?

In this pamphlet, the term "latex" refers to natural rubber latex, the product manufactured from a milky fluid derived from the rubber tree, *Hevea brasiliensis*. Several types of synthetic rubber are also referred to as "latex," but these do not release the proteins that cause allergic reactions.

### What is latex allergy?

Latex allergy is a reaction to certain proteins in latex rubber. The amount of latex exposure needed to produce sensitization or an allergic reaction is unknown. Increasing the exposure to latex proteins increases the risk of developing allergic symptoms. In sensitized persons, symptoms usually begin within minutes of exposure; but they can occur hours later and can be quite varied. Mild reactions to latex involve skin redness, rash, hives, or itching. More severe reactions may involve respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes, scratchy throat, and asthma (difficult breathing, coughing spells, and wheezing). Rarely, shock may occur; however, a life-threatening reaction is seldom the first sign of latex allergy.



### Who is at risk of developing latex allergy?

Health care workers are at risk of developing latex allergy because they use latex gloves frequently. Workers with less glove use (such as housekeepers, hairdressers, and workers in industries that manufacture latex products) are also at risk.

### Is skin contact the only type of latex exposure?

**No.** Latex proteins become fastened to the lubricant powder used in some gloves. When workers change gloves, the protein/powder particles become airborne and can be inhaled.

### How is latex allergy treated?

Detecting symptoms early, reducing exposure to latex, and obtaining medical advice are important to prevent long-term health effects. Once a worker becomes allergic to latex, special precautions are needed to prevent exposures. Certain medications may reduce the allergy symptoms; but

complete latex avoidance, though quite difficult, is the most effective approach.

### Are there other types of reactions to latex besides latex allergy?

**Yes.** The most common reaction to latex products is *irritant contact dermatitis*- the development of dry, itchy, irritated areas on the skin, usually the hands. This reaction is caused by irritation from wearing gloves and by exposure to the powders added to them. Irritant contact dermatitis is not a true allergy.

*Allergic contact dermatitis* (sometimes called chemical sensitivity dermatitis) results from the chemicals added to latex during harvesting, processing, or manufacturing. These chemicals can cause a skin rash similar to that of poison ivy.

### How can I protect myself from latex allergy?

Take the following steps to protect yourself from latex exposure and allergy in the workplace:

1. Use nonlatex gloves for activities that are not likely to involve contact with infectious materials (food preparation, routine housekeeping, general maintenance, etc.).
  2. Appropriate barrier protection is necessary when handling infectious materials. If you choose latex gloves, use powder-free gloves with reduced protein content. Such gloves reduce exposures to latex protein and thus reduce the risk of latex allergy.
- So-called hypoallergenic latex gloves do not reduce the risk of latex allergy. However, they may reduce reactions to chemical additives in the latex (allergic contact dermatitis).
  - Use appropriate work practices to reduce the chance of reactions to latex.

- When wearing latex gloves, do not use oil-based hand creams or lotions (which can cause glove deterioration).
- After removing latex gloves, wash hands with a mild soap and dry thoroughly.
- Practice good housekeeping: frequently clean areas and equipment contaminated with latex-containing dust.
- Take advantage of all latex allergy education and training provided by your employer and become familiar with procedures for preventing latex allergy.
- Learn to recognize the symptoms of latex allergy: skin rash; hives; flushing; itching; nasal, eye, or sinus symptoms; asthma; and (rarely) shock.

### What if I think I have latex allergy?

If you develop symptoms of latex allergy, avoid direct contact with latex gloves and other latex-containing products until you can see a physician experienced in treating latex allergy.

If you have latex allergy, consult your physician regarding the following precautions:

- Avoid contact with latex gloves and products.
- Avoid areas where you might inhale the powder from latex gloves worn by other workers.
- Tell your employer and health care providers (physicians, nurses, dentists, etc.) that you have latex allergy.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet.

### Additional Information

For additional information about latex allergy, or to request a copy of NIOSH Alert No. 97-135, [Preventing Allergic Reactions to Natural Rubber Latex in the Workplace](#), call 1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)

You may also visit the [NIOSH Homepage](#)

To access latex allergy websites, select *Latex Allergy* through the NIOSH Homepage, or access the websites directly at the following locations:

# Show of hands who gets it?



# Office Climate Control



vs.



We've all experienced it one time or another, the cubicle/office is too cold or too hot. It seems so simple, just fix it and make it right! Adjust the thermostat, turn up the heat, make it cooler or eliminate that draft. Unfortunately, it's not always quite that simple. Some people feel more comfortable in cooler temperatures, while others prefer a warmer environment. To further add to the dynamics, a multitude of other factors can impact a building's indoor temperature. The building design, interior configuration, humidity levels, indoor air movement, outdoor temperatures, heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) settings, and personal garments all play a significant role in our indoor temperature comfort. Many of our facilities utilize a Building Automation System (BAS) to control a facility's indoor temperature. This system monitors the thermostats within the building and controls the preset temperature from a central location.

Unlike Cal/OSHA's Heat Illness Prevention Standard which regulates employee exposure to the sun, there are no specific regulations for indoor temperature. As a general rule, OSHA *recommends* temperature control in the range of 68-76°F. According to The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), temperatures in this range should be comfortable for most people. In general, these temperature ranges are intended to accommodate an employee wearing a normal amount of clothing as to feel neither too cold nor too warm.

The County of Riverside has two Board of Supervisor (BOS) Policies that address indoor temperature issues: (1) BOS Policy H-4, *Conservation of Energy* states, "Set air conditioning and heating controls to comply with settings as not to cool below 76°F, and not to heat above 68°F..."

BOS Policy H-19 addresses *Guidelines on Dealing with Unusual Temperatures in County Facilities*. You can review each policy in its entirety on the Riverside County intranet site.

If you are trying to achieve a comfortable temperature in your immediate work area, keep in mind the following dos and don'ts:

#### **DO's:**

- For general assistance in addressing indoor temperature related issues, please consult with your supervisor.
- Wear appropriate clothing for weather conditions including shoes. Keep a sweater or light jacket handy in your work station for cooler conditions.

#### **Don'ts**

- Block air vents or grilles.
- Attempt to adjust individual thermostats.
- Place equipment that emits hot or cold, such as refrigerators or computers near thermostats.
- Use portable space heaters.



# Web-Training



**Complete your mandatory training from the comfort of your own desk..**



## Drivers Training Online

Class				This class completes the mandatory training requirement for all County employees, interns, and volunteers by job classification or job assignment, who are or may be required to drive a County or private vehicle on County business.
7/22	Tue	9:30 am	11:00 am	
8/12	Tue	9:30 am	11:00 am	

*To participate in any webinar training, you must have access to the internet and a phone line. To receive credit for the class, the Safety Office must receive your quiz within three working days*

- What to do in an Accident
- Vehicle Laws Distractions
- Stopping Distance
- How to report an accident
- 5 points of Defensive Driving
- Reaction Time etc...



## Employee Workplace Violence (EWPV)

August				This class completes the mandatory training requirement for all County employees, interns, and volunteers by job classification or job assignment, who are or may be required to drive a County or private vehicle on County business.
26	Tue	9:30 am	11:00 am	

*To participate in any webinar training, you must have access to the internet and a phone line. To receive credit for the class, the Safety Office must receive your quiz within three working days*

- Plan
- What to look for
- Types of Violence
- Run/Hide/Fight
- Statistics
- Facility Barriers



# Coming Soon!

## To a training room near you!

Department Safety Representative (DSR)  
Training Academy

Safety Division will be providing DSR training in the  
very near future...



Contact your Safety Coordinator for future  
information!