

Latex Allergy

Latex is a milky sap collected from the rubber tree. It may be used to manufacture many medical products, including gloves, band aids, catheters, blood pressure cuff, tourniquets, surgical drains, and IV tubing. It contains rubber proteins that react with antibodies, which may cause an allergic reaction. Although latex is harmless for most people, life-threatening reactions can occur in people with a latex allergy when they are exposed to latex containing items. You are not born with this allergy but may become more sensitive to it with each exposure. Some people who have reactions to foods such as kiwi, banana, avocado and chestnuts are at a higher risk of developing a latex allergy. Also, people who have repeated exposure to latex products are at a higher risk of becoming allergic to latex. These include patients who have had frequent operations or use catheters. People with many allergies and healthcare workers who wear latex gloves are also high risk. Symptoms may be mild or severe. Patients need to inform their healthcare team of their latex allergy or sensitivity.

It is important that you notify your healthcare team immediately if you develop signs of an allergy to latex. Although a latex allergy may cause any of the symptoms listed below, most concerning are hives, difficulty breathing, and a contact rash from skin contact with a latex containing item.

Where can latex be found?

Medical Setting

- Gloves
- Band aids
- Catheters
- Enema catheter tips
- Blood pressure cuffs
- Tourniquets

Home Setting

- Balloons
- Balls
- Condoms
- Diaphragms
- Erasers
- Pacifiers
- Paints
- Rubber bands
- Shoes
- Toys

Here are some helpful hints if you have a latex allergy:

- Use non-latex gloves.
- Avoid contact with latex products. Check the label or call the manufacturer if you are unsure of the contents of a product.
- Identify your allergy to others by wearing a medical-alert bracelet.
- Inform your healthcare team of your allergy.
- Inform your workplace, family and friends of your allergy.
- Carry an epinephrine pen if you have severe reactions.
- Seek prompt medical attention if you develop severe reactions.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.