

Latex Allergy

Latex comes from the sap of rubber trees. A latex allergy is an immune system response to certain proteins found in natural rubber (latex).

Symptoms

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Itchy throat
- Wheezing
- Hives
- Rash
- Swelling

Reactions occur when contact is made to the skin, mucous membranes (mouth, genitals, bladder, or rectum) or the bloodstream (during surgery). Breathing the powder inside latex gloves or balloons can also cause a reaction.

Signs often show up right away after contact. Reactions can range from mild to severe. Severe reactions occur within minutes and include many body systems and in some cases result in a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis.

Many products used in the hospital, community, and home contain latex.

Products in the Hospital and Clinic

- IV tubing
- Surgical and exam gloves
- Catheters
- Tourniquets
- Adhesive tape
- Elastic bandages

Products in Home and Community

- Baby bottle nipples
- Elastic on diapers and clothes
- Pacifiers
- Balloons
- Toys
- Erasers
- Art supplies
- Dental dams
- Condoms

There are non-latex products for these items. They are often made of plastic, vinyl, or silicone.

People at Risk

Anyone can get a latex allergy. It often occurs with frequent contact. Certain groups of people are at greater risk. They often have frequent contact.

Those at higher risk include:

- Health care workers
- Latex factory workers
- People with spina bifida
- People having multiple surgeries
- History of reaction to multiple IV medicines
- Certain food allergies (bananas, avocados, chestnuts, kiwi, and tomatoes) due to cross-reactivity with latex allergen

Avoiding Latex

There are medicines to help treat the symptoms of latex allergy. The best treatment is to **avoid** contact with latex.

Alert your health care team if you have had a reaction to latex or unexplained allergic reaction during surgery.

Avoid all latex products. Use other kinds of gloves, tape, pacifiers, etc. Use nitrile or vinyl gloves instead of latex gloves.

Ask your doctors about medicine you can take before surgery.

For serious reactions, talk to your doctor about getting an epinephrine device. Wear a Medic Alert bracelet or necklace.

People with spina bifida or urologic defects should be on **latex alert**.

Children with Latex Allergies

Communication is the key. You will need to alert anyone involved in your child's care.

- All health care providers
- Schools
- Day care workers
- Babysitters

Teach your child to know and avoid latex products. Be sure that your child's medical, dental, and school records have a latex allergy alert.

Who to Call

UWHC Pediatric Allergy Clinic
(608) 263-6180

UWHC Adult Allergy Clinic
(608) 263-6180

UWHC Spina Bifida Clinic
(608) 263-6420

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This information was adapted with permission from the Spina Bifida Association of America.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#4648.