

Latex Allergy

History of Latex Allergy

Since the introduction of latex products in the medical field there have been latex allergy occurrences. Advances in the production of rubber such as synthetic latex gloves and powder-free gloves have contributed to a slight decline in latex allergy.

What is a Latex Allergy?

People are allergic to the protein found in natural rubber. Symptoms of latex allergy can range from sneezing to anaphylactic shock. Latex can be found in many different products; such as waistbands on clothing, diapers, condoms, rubber toys, pacifiers and baby-bottle nipples.

Types of Latex

Harden Latex (Most people will not have an allergic reaction to these products.)

- Athletic Shoes
- Tires
- Rubber Balls

Dipped Latex (Most people will have an allergic reaction to these products.)

- Latex Gloves
- Balloons
- Condoms

Other Latex

- Erasers
- Rubber Toy Parts
- Rubber Bands
- Elastic in Clothing

Risk Factors for Latex Allergy

Health car workers

Rubber industry workers

Frequent use of latex gloves

Extensive surgical history

Spina bifida

Positive food allergy (banana, avocado, chestnut, passion fruit and kiwi fruit)

Latex Allergy Symptoms

Mild Symptoms

- Itching
- Skin Redness
- Rash or Hives

Moderate to Severe Symptoms

- Sneezing or Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Itching, red watery eyes
- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Anaphylactic shock

In most cases, long term exposure is required for latex allergy to develop. Direct contact with latex is not needed for symptoms to present. Latex proteins in the powder of gloves can be inhaled and result in an allergic reaction.

Diagnosing Latex Allergy

A complete history of latex experiences and other allergy symptoms is necessary to begin the process of diagnosing latex allergy. Latex allergy skin testing is performed by the introduction of latex on the forearm or back by using a fine needle. A raised bump or “reaction” will be noted at the site of injection indicating a positive reaction.

Treatment for Latex Allergy

The only definitive treatment for latex allergy is avoidance. Medication can help reduce symptoms of latex allergy. If a known latex allergy exist, proper measures should be taken to eliminate exposure to latex and alert bracelet should be worn. If you had a severe reaction to latex you should carry an epinephrine pen. If you are a healthcare worker non-latex gloves should be worn by you and everyone around you. It is also important for family, friends, and co-workers to know of your latex allergy.