American Latex Allergy Association

ACAAI: Latex Allergy

?Latex allergy is an immune system reaction to natural rubber latex that is found in most latex gloves and many other medical products. Allergy to latex poses a serious health risk for some patients and health care workers and, in rare cases, can be fatal. More than 1,000 cases of reactions to latex-containing products have been reported to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration since 1988.

- Natural rubber latex is a product derived from trees and should not be confused with synthetic latex. Synthetic products, including latex house paints, have not been shown to pose any hazard to latex-sensitive individuals.
- Natural rubber latex is found in many medical supplies, including disposable gloves, tubes, syringes, stethoscopes, catheters, dressings and bandages. The substance also is found in many consumer items, such as condoms, balloons, shoe soles, tires, toys and pacifiers, but these products rarely cause problems.
- Those at highest risk for developing latex allergy are people who have had frequent exposures to latex. These include patients who have undergone many surgical or medical procedures, especially beginning in infancy. Health care workers who wear latex gloves and others who are frequently exposed to latex, such as workers involved in the manufacture of latex products, also are at risk.
- The risk of latex allergy may be greatest in those with a history of hay fever or other allergies, including food allergies.
- The warning signs of latex allergy include prior allergic reactions after contact with balloons or rubber gloves, or unexplained allergic reactions during a medical or dental procedure. Rash or eczema on the hands of health care workers may be signs of sensitivity to the latex often contained in rubber gloves.
- All products and medical devices in contact with individuals at risk should be reviewed for possible latex content. A label of ?hypoallergenic? does NOT mean that a product is latex-free.
- Health care workers with known latex allergy must avoid latex gloves and use synthetic latex or non-latex substitutes. Their co-workers must not use powdered latex gloves because the powders can absorb latex proteins and carry them into the air.

For a free brochure on latex allergy or for an allergist referral, contact the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) by calling toll-free (800) 842-7777. Additional information also is available on the ACAAI Web site at **www.acaai.org** [1].

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Links:
[1] http://www.acaai.org