American Latex Allergy Association

Web Article: Latex Reaction In Child Care

Child care food and health care workers daily use rubber gloves or other products made with latex. Latex (the sap from the Hevea brasiliensis tree) is used to make “rubber” gloves. Some people react to latex products. The reaction may be mild or severe. Some people may have watery eyes or skin irritation on the hands. Others may have severe allergy like breathing difficulty or collapse.

How do you know if you will react or if the children in your care will react to latex?

Workers may not know they will have a reaction to latex until they are exposed and have symptoms. The reaction may be mistaken for a skin reaction from frequent handwashing or a mild “cold” (watery eyes, runny nose, sneeze or cough). Parents of infants or other young children may not know their child will react to latex. When a latex reaction is suspected the person needs a medical evaluation. Employers should urge workers to seek medical evaluation and to receive medical guidance about work task. When children are suspected of having a latex reaction, child care providers should work with parents to secure medical evaluation and guidance for the child care setting.

What does a medical evaluation for latex reaction mean?

The health care provider will ask many questions about why a person suspects they have a latex reaction. Questions about the type of reaction, frequency of reaction, and exposure to latex are typical. The health care provider will examine any skin reactions. You may have blood test to determine the level of latex sensitivity. Your health care provider may ask you to see a medical specialist depending on your reaction. Written guidelines and information should be given to you to assist you in determining work task to limit or prevent exposure to latex.

What should workers with a known latex reaction do?

People with latex reaction should wear a medical identification bracelet or other device stating the latex sensitivity. Workers sensitive to latex should obtain guidelines from their health care provider about appropriate products to use when doing child care task. Guidelines for workers should be shared with the child care employer and job task reviewed. Gloves must be made of vinyl or some other substance that does not contain or cross-react with latex should be available at diaper changing areas, first aid kits, emergency supplies, food service, and in play items or spaces. Other common supplies that contain latex, such as rubber bands, should also be removed from the environment.[2] Workers with latex reaction should read the label of all products suspected of containing latex. If you have a known or suspected latex reaction do not use latex gloves. The workplace should provide powder-free gloves with reduced protein content for co-workers. The latex proteins, that cause allergies, attach to the powder

used in gloves. This powder can become airborne when the gloves are removed and be inhaled by those with latex allergies. For this reason, non-latex synthetic gloves should be available for every worker?s use.

What if a child has a latex reaction?

All child care providers within the facility need to be aware of any child with latex reaction. Latex products should not be used for these children. Child care providers should work with parents and follow the child's medical guidelines for using non-latex products. Gloves must be made of vinyl or some other substance that does not contain or cross-react with latex should be available at diaper changing areas, first aid kits, emergency supplies, food service, and in play items or spaces. Other common supplies that contain latex, such as rubber bands, should also be removed from the environment.
[1]

Is latex reaction really a serious concern?

The latex reaction usually is seen as skin irritation to the hands or mild symptoms like runny nose and watering eyes. But, for some people the reaction to latex can be life threatening. Workers and older children with latex allergy should wear identification noting the latex sensitivity. It is not practical or safe for young children to wear medical identification—so parents and child care workers must be diligent about notifying all care providers of the child's latex sensitivity.

Where can I learn more about latex sensitivity?

Ask you public library to help you find appropriate information sources. Your health care provider should have written information for patients with latex reactions. The U.S. government has several agencies that oversee latex production and sales.

Resources
Consumer Product Safety Commission, Office of Information and Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., 20207. Telephone voice 800-638-2772, TTY 800-638-8270. Internet:
www.cpsc.gov [2]

Food and Drug Administration, HFI-40, Rockville, MD 20857. Telephone 1-888-463-6332. Email:
webmail@oc.fda.gov [3]
www.fda.gov [4]

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Telephone 1-800-356-4674. Email:
pubstaft@cdc.gov [5]
Center for Disease Control [6]

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[1] Preventing Allergic Reactions to Natural Rubber Latex in the Workplace, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

Publication No. 97-135, July 1998.

[2]American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care. Caring For Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-Of-Home Child Care Programs Second Edition. 2002. pg. 95.

[3] Latex Allergy, A Prevention Guide, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Publication No. 98-113, Feb. 1999.

This document was prepared by the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care.
For any further questions please contact us at 1-800-598-5437 or**email us**[7].

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