



## Ericka's Story

I am currently a student in an Occupational Therapy Assistant program, and it was not until 2 months into my program I found out that I had a latex allergy. I found this out the hard way, being in class with 20+ students stretching Thera Band?. Thera Band? is an elastic stretching band that many facilities such as Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy use which varies in color and strength. It took a little under 10 minutes before my first symptom of sniffing and runny nose occurred, followed by an itchy mouth and tongue and itchy and swollen eyes. I was immediately sent home from school with strict orders to go the hospital. Three months later I had another run in with latex on campus, this time with a large balloon. Once again, all the symptoms from last time occurred with an additional symptom of being really hot and sweaty. Being that I will be going into the healthcare field, I thought that my only worry was latex gloves, and it was a bit comforting to know that there were many facilities here in Florida that uses Vinyl gloves and not latex. However, many facilities took one step of prevention and not the other being that Thera Band with latex is still being used. I was diagnosed with Type I hypersensitivity but from what I have experienced, it is just airborne. I don?t have many issues with rubber toys or tires or rubber bands or even elastic waistbands, it?s mainly the powder. What concerns me further is that Thera Band? (like many other latex products) can be ordered latex free, and it will do the same function. Just to make it through a day, I am just now finding an allergy medicine that ?helps? and I take it everyday, an antihistamine nasal spray, another type of nasal spray, an inhaler, and I have a wear a medical alert bracelet, and I carry my epipen.

Ericka

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