

Can latex allergy be life threatening?

There have been deaths caused by this allergy. This is a very rare event, but the possibility means you should take the allergy seriously. The most important things are:

- avoid unnecessary contact with latex
- be aware of the main dangers:
- seek medical advice if latex exposure causes:
- wheezing, tongue or throat swelling or if you feel unwell, e.g. faint or dizzy.

If you are allergic you may need to carry emergency treatment in case of a severe allergic reaction, but only your GP can make this decision.

National Support Groups

The Anaphylaxis Campaign

www.anaphylaxis.org

Allergy UK

www.allergyuk.org/

Emergency Bracelets

MedicAlert

www.medicalert.co.uk

Tel 01908 951045

Health and Safety Executive

www.hse.gov.uk

Trust COSHH & Dermatitis Policy

What is Latex?

'Latex' refers to rubber made from the sap of the rubber tree. It is a natural not a man made product.

What is in it?

Mainly water and rubber hydrocarbon, along with sugar, resins and proteins. It is the proteins which cause the allergy

What are the symptoms?

These vary, depending on the severity of allergy and route of exposure (direct contact or airborne) - symptoms generally appear within 30 minutes

- itching and swelling at contact site
- itchy / runny nose with sneezing
- itchy watery eyes
- itch and swelling of mouth, tongue, throat
- wheezing
- rarely breathing difficulty / collapse (anaphylaxis)
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- wheezing, tongue or throat swelling or if you feel unwell, e.g. faint or dizzy.

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Health and Safety

Latex Allergy

This leaflet contains general information and clarification can be obtained from Occupational Health. You should contact your own GP for specific advice on your condition.

*Occupational Health
Salisbury District Hospital
Salisbury
Wiltshire SP2 8BJ*

*Telephone: 01722 336262
Ext. 5235
e-mail:*

occhealth@salisbury.nhs.net

Fruit and vegetables

What are the dangers for me?

Latex is more of a problem for allergic individuals when it contacts a mucosal surface (such as mouth, nose or genitalia) than skin. This may occur either by:

- direct contact e.g. with balloons, condom and diaphragm contraceptives, or the glove of a dentist, surgeon or gynaecologist.
- Breathing in airborne latex particles e.g. powdered gloves or balloons.
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In this situation, symptoms may occur quickly due to rapid absorption of the latex allergen.

What has got latex in it?

Many consumer and medical products may contain latex sometimes in unlikely places. But don't worry, lists are readily available from support groups and websites, and you should make it a priority to contact them to learn where latex may be present.

In general, 'stretchy' rubber products such as gloves or rubber bands are much more likely to be a problem, than 'hard' ones such as tyres, which contain little protein.

Some people with latex allergy also react to certain fruits and vegetables, such as banana, kiwi, avocado, tomato or potato. This is because these foods contain similar proteins to latex, which can cross-react.

Reactions may also be caused by food that has been handled by people wearing latex gloves, e.g. in restaurants, canteens and packing facilities.

Medical settings

Latex is widely used in medicine because it gives such good protection against infections. So please follow this advice carefully.

If you become a patient: Inform the following professionals of your allergy and make sure that they understand its significance and that they know how to manage your allergy safely. If necessary, show this leaflet.

- Hospital doctor
- Family doctor
- Dentist
- Nurse
- Radiographer
- Chiropodist
- Physiotherapist
- midwives

Consider carrying with you:

MedicAlert bracelet or necklace stating 'allergic to natural rubber latex'.

This is especially important if you are going to have an:

- Operation
- Internal examination X-ray
- Catheterisation

where special precautions are necessary, insist that you are NOT examined by anyone who wears latex gloves

Remind the doctor, nurse or dentist that certain injection vials, eg local anaesthetics and vaccines may contain rubber bungs or stoppers. Remember to inform the following:

- Pharmacist or hairdresser
- beautician
- employer , friends or relatives
- school
- garage (servicing)

Products not containing Latex will display this non Latex sign.



Rubber type materials not displaying this sign should be regarded as containing Latex