

## Latex Allergy

Commonly called NRL - Natural Rubber Latex

Natural rubber latex is a processed plant product derived from the milky sap of the *Hevea Braziliensis* tree (Brazilian rubber tree). The tree can be found in Africa and Southeast Asia. NRL is a strong, flexible and tear resistance substance. It is used in many household items and in medical supplies. Some materials may be referred to as "latex" but they do not contain the protein that produces latex allergy (example: latex paint)

Latex allergy is a fairly new problem in the USA; it was first recognized in the late 1970's. If someone is allergic to latex that means their body's immune system is responding to the proteins in natural latex rubber or to the additives used in processing it. This causes the body to release substances such as histamine and other chemicals, therefore causing a reaction. Reactions to latex can range from a very mild skin rash to anaphylaxis.

### TYPES OF LATEX REACTIONS

There are three (3) types of reactions that occur in people exposed to products containing latex.

#### Irritant Contact Dermatitis

This is not an allergic reaction. It is the result of damage to the skin. It is the most commonly associated with exposure to latex gloves. These reactions do not involve the immune system. They are due to sweating, rubbing, occlusion, repeated hand washing, detergents, scrubbing agents, chemicals or powders left on the hands. Irritant contact dermatitis usually fades if exposure is discontinued.

#### Type 4 - Allergic Contact Dermatitis

This is a delayed reaction and is usually localized. It is often caused by the chemicals added to latex not the latex itself. Chemicals are added to make the gloves have a longer shelf life and to make them more durable and elastic. The onset is 24 to 48 hours after exposure, and symptoms may peak days later. This is not a life threatening reaction.

#### Type 1 Latex Allergy - immediate hypersensitivity

This is an immediate reaction to latex. It usually occurs at the site of contact, although rare, it can be generalized and may develop into life threatening anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis can occur without any warning.

Some things you should do if you have been told you have Type 1 Latex Allergy:

1. Carry an EpiPen and know how to use it.
2. Have an emergency plan.

# Francisco J. Cano, M.D.

Diplomat of the American Board of Allergy, and Immunology  
Pediatric and Adult Asthma, Allergy and Immunology

3. Educate yourself on the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis.
4. Wear a medic alert bracelet.
5. Contact your local EMS and find out if they are equipped with latex-free products.
6. Consider carrying an Emergency Bag with latex-free medical supplies.
7. Inform necessary people of your allergy (family, friends, coworkers, doctors, EMT's, hospitals, clergy, etc.)
8. Have lists of "Latex Containing" products so you know what to avoid.
9. Have "Latex Free" lists so you know what products are safe to use

## Resources

### A.L.E.R.T. (American Latex Allergy Association)

P.O. Box 13930

Milwaukee, WI 53213-0930

Phone: 888-972-5378

Fax: 262-677-2808

[E-mail: alert@execpc.com](mailto:alert@execpc.com)

Web site: [www.latexallergyresources.org](http://www.latexallergyresources.org)

### AAAAI (American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology)

611 Wells Street

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Phone: 414-272-6701

Fax: 414-272-6070

Physician Referral: 800-822-2762

Web site: [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)

### Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network

10400 Eaton Place, Suite 107

Fairfax, VA 22030-2208

Phone: 800-929-4040

Fax: 703-691-2713

Web site: [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

# Francisco J. Cano, M.D.

Diplomat of the American Board of Allergy, and Immunology  
Pediatric and Adult Asthma, Allergy and Immunology

## Medical Sources of Latex

Adhesive Tape  
Anesthesia Mask  
Bite Blocks  
Blood Pressure Cuffs  
Breathing Bags/Masks  
Catheters  
Dental Devices  
Disposable Syringes with Rubber Stoppers  
Drains  
Elastic Bandages  
Electrode Pads  
Endo Tubes  
Enema Tips  
Eye Dropper Bulbs

Finger Cots  
GI Tubes  
Gloves  
Hot Water Bottles  
Heparin Locks  
Implants  
Multiple Dose Medication Files  
Prophy Cups  
Protective Sheets  
Rubber Pads or Sheeting  
Stethoscope Tubing  
Tourniquets  
Ultrasound Covers  
Urine Bags and Straps  
Ventilator Bellows & Tubing  
Warming Blankets  
Wheelchair Tires

## House Hold Sources of Latex Exposure

Adhesive Strips  
Balloons  
Bathing Suites  
Bicycle Shorts  
Condoms  
Contraceptives, Diagrams, and Sponges  
Dishwashing Gloves  
Elastic Bandages  
Hot Water Bottles  
Rubber Bands  
Rubber Pants

Rubber Cement  
Erasers  
Stretch Socks  
Swimming Cap/Goggle/Mask  
Toys  
Pacifiers  
Sports Equipment  
Teething Rings  
Nipples  
Shoe Soles  
Mouth Guard

## Latex Product Safe Alternative

Balloons .....Mylar Balloons  
Baby bath toys .....Plastic or cloth toys  
Belts for clothing..... Leather or cloth belts  
Condoms .....Sheep cecun condoms  
Crib mattress pads .....Heavy cotton pads  
Elastic bands .....Paper clips or twine  
Feeding nipples .....Silicone nipples  
Household gloves.....Cotton or synthetic glove  
Halloween rubber masks .....Plastic or water based paints  
Rubber boots .....Clear vinyl rubbers  
Raincoat or slicker .....Nylon or synthetic coats  
Sneakers..... Leather shoes  
Swim Fins/goggles .....Clear plastic fins/goggles  
Tooth massagers .....Soft brushes