



## **Latex Allergy**

### **School Safety Guidelines**

To avoid potentially allergic reactions, school personnel should be educated about latex-containing products in school settings. School health programs should review their use of latex gloves and other latex-containing products, and replace them with non-latex products where indicated. Using powdered rubber gloves may increase the risk of allergic reactions, since the rubber protein particles may stick to the powder and be expelled into the air when removing gloves.

Alternative products are recommended for anyone who has a history of latex-allergy, and for those who are at risk of developing latex allergy.

*(Note: The American Latex Allergy Association recommends that latex-safe protocols should be used in the school environment, even if symptoms are not present, in order to prevent the development of a latex allergy).*

#### **Educate School Personnel**

- ❖ Identify students/school employees who have a latex allergy, and notify appropriate school personnel.
- ❖ Alert school personnel about the need to minimize latex exposure to those students/school employees who may be at risk for developing the allergy.
- ❖ Provide education to all school personnel on latex allergy and related issues.
- ❖ Consider the creation of an **Individualized Health Care Plan** which would include:
  - **Assessment** - including medical information about the student's condition, previous exposures, response to medical interventions, the student's knowledge level, self-care skills, and communication skills
  - **Planned Intervention** - including: latex identification and avoidance in the school environment; enhancing the student's own knowledge level and self-care needs with regard to latex identification and avoidance, as well as effectively communicating onset of symptoms of reaction; education of school personnel on measures to take in the event of suspected or apparent exposure; and the development and implementation of an emergency medical response plan in the event of reaction.

#### **Create a Safe Environment**

- ❖ Maintain an inventory of latex-free alternatives to latex medical equipment and school supplies.
- ❖ Implement latex allergy guidelines pertaining to students and school personnel.
- ❖ Provide task-appropriate, powder-free, latex-free gloves. (Using powdered rubber gloves may increase the risk of allergic reactions, since the rubber protein particles may stick to the powder and be expelled into the air when removing gloves).
- ❖ Assess high-risk areas for latex exposure;
  - **Classrooms** – remove erasers, rubber band, art supplies, and science/lab equipment made with latex, and provide latex-free substitutes.
  - **Playground/Gym** – Provide latex free substitutes for rubber mats, flooring, balls, and racquet handles. If a substitute is not available, an alternate activity may be considered.
  - **Custodial Supplies** – Provide latex-free gloves for cleaning.

- **Health Offices** – Consider use of latex-free gloves, band-aids, and tape only in the health office. This will avoid the problem of protein-laden powder from latex gloves contaminating surfaces and remaining airborne long enough to trigger a respiratory reaction, as well as ensuring unnecessary exposure to latex-containing products for all students.

### **Develop an Emergency Protocol**

- ❖ Include specific plans for:
  - Recognizing and treating an allergic reaction
  - When to call for help
  - Facilitating ambulance/EMS access to area of emergency
- ❖ Have latex-free emergency supplies available for use.

### **Latex Allergy Resources**

- ❖ American Latex Allergy Association <http://www.latexallergyresources.org/>
- ❖ Asthma and Allergy Association of America  
<http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=21&cont=383>

Medline Plus <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/latexallergy.html>