

Recommendations for Prevention of Latex Allergy

(Adapted from NIOSH Publication No. 97-135, June 1997)

Latex allergy can be prevented by protecting employees from undue latex exposures. NIOSH recommends the following steps be taken by employees and employers to protect workers from latex exposure and allergy in the workplace:

- Appropriate barrier protection is necessary when handling infectious materials. If latex gloves are chosen, use powder-free gloves with reduced protein content.
- Use non-latex gloves when there is little potential for contact with infectious materials (e.g. food service).
- Ensure that employees use good housekeeping practices to remove latex containing dust from the workplace (frequently clean contaminated areas and change ventilation filters and vacuum bags regularly).
- Provide employees with education programs and training materials about latex allergy.
- Employees should be familiar with procedures for preventing latex allergy and should learn to recognize the symptoms of latex allergy.
- Screen high-risk employees for latex allergy symptoms periodically. Detecting symptoms early and preventing further latex exposure are essential for preventing long-term effects.
- Evaluate current prevention strategies whenever an employee is diagnosed with latex allergy.
- After removing latex gloves, wash hands with a mild soap and dry thoroughly.

Individuals who develop symptoms of latex allergy should avoid direct contact with latex gloves and other latex-containing Products until evaluated by a physician experienced in diagnosing latex allergy.

Efforts to decrease the amount of latex in the environment through the use of other materials (e.g. vinyl gloves), when appropriate, are encouraged. Because the powder in powdered latex gloves increases the dissemination of allergy-causing proteins and sensitization to latex, the use of powder-free gloves is recommended. Please share this communication and the NIOSH Alert with your managers, colleagues and employees. Facilities should develop and implement appropriate policies that address patient and staff exposure.