



Latex Allergy

What is latex?

Latex is the sap from a kind of tree that is used to make rubber products. Latex is found in many items used in the hospital, the community and the home. It is in some clothing, toys, gloves, balloons, rubber tires and many other items. Most latex items are made in other forms, like plastic, vinyl or silicone.

What is latex allergy?

Latex contains proteins that cause allergies in some people. Signs of an allergic response to latex are:

- Watery eyes
- Breathing problems (wheezing)
- Swelling, redness, itching, hives or rash

These responses occur when latex items touch the skin, the mucous membranes (like inside the mouth, bladder, vagina or rectum) or are breathed in by the lungs.

For some people, the symptoms can get worse the more contact they have with latex.

It is rare, but in some cases, a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis may happen. This is when the mucous membranes swell and breathing may be cut off.

Who is at risk for developing a latex allergy?

Anyone can develop a latex allergy, but certain groups are at greater risk of becoming allergic. One high-risk group is children who have had many exposures to latex products.

Also included in the high-risk group are children who have:

- Had three or more surgeries in their stomach area
- Urologic or genital problems, especially those needing a catheter
- Spina bifida
- Severe food allergies to bananas, avocados, other fruits and water chestnuts

Healthcare providers are also at risk.

How can I lower my child's risk for latex allergy?

If your child is in one of the **high-risk** groups but has not yet had an allergic response, there are some things that you can do:

- Try to limit your child's contact with latex and rubber products.

To Learn More

- Urology Nurses
206-987-2509
- Allergy Nurses
206-987-2082
- Ask your child's nurse or doctor
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers
206-987-2280 (TTY)

- Avoid letting latex touch your child's mucous membranes (like inside the mouth, bladder, vagina or rectum).
- Use products made of other materials (i.e. plastic, vinyl, silicone or Mylar).
- Notify your child's school and day care so that rubber items like toys and balloons can be avoided.
- Have all healthcare providers, including dentists, use the non-latex versions of items like gloves and catheters.

If your child has an allergy to latex:

- Have your child wear a MedicAlert bracelet or necklace.
- Avoid all latex products.
- Use products made of other materials (i.e. plastic, vinyl, silicone or Mylar).
- Carry a letter from your child's doctor describing their allergy.
- Ask your child's doctor if you should carry a kit to treat anaphylaxis with you. These kits give you the supplies to inject epinephrine into your child to stop the allergic reaction.
- Carry a pair of sterile, non-latex gloves for times when only the latex type is available.
- If your child is scheduled for a procedure or surgery, tell the healthcare providers about the latex allergy. Special medicines may be given before the surgery to prevent a reaction. Ask for the first appointment of the day.
- Tell your child's dentist about the allergy and ask for the first appointment of the day.
- Tell your child's school and day care so that rubber products (toys, balloons, etc.) can be avoided.
- If your child is having any signs of latex allergy, contact your doctor right away or call 911 if needed.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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