

Community Alert about Latex Allergy: Notice to Schools

Dear School Personnel:

Because of the growing awareness of latex allergy in children and adults and our desire to prevent reactions to natural rubber latex, we are writing to notify you of the need to reduce or eliminate latex exposure in your school. Children with chronic conditions (spina bifida, multiple operations, hydrocephalus treated with shunts) have been found to have a high risk of developing this allergy, which can be severe and life-threatening. Latex allergy is also reported in healthy children with common allergic conditions such as asthma and eczema, and in adults who are exposed to latex through their work or medical care. The allergy can develop when there is exposure to a product containing natural rubber latex even if there have been no previous reactions. Routes of exposure include contact with skin, wounds, mucous membranes, injection into the bloodstream and inhalation or ingestion of latex-laden powder particles. Many children are so sensitive that small powder particles from balloons and gloves floating invisibly in the room air can cause an allergic reaction – and this reaction can be severe.

School systems should substitute synthetic (e.g. vinyl, nitrile or neoprene) gloves for the latex gloves commonly used in science labs, food preparation and by health personnel for first aid, catheterization and other personal care. Latex balloons, a leading cause of death from choking in children as well as a principal cause of latex reactions, should be eliminated from all school functions. Mylar balloons may be substituted. Exposure to other natural rubber latex containing products should also be avoided. These products may include some physical education materials, art supplies, and first aid supplies such as bandaids and adhesive tapes. The attached materials can assist school personnel in developing a latex-safe environment for all students, staff and visitors.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. Please call or write to me if you would like more information.

Sincerely,
