

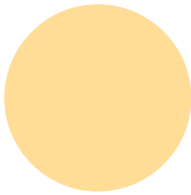
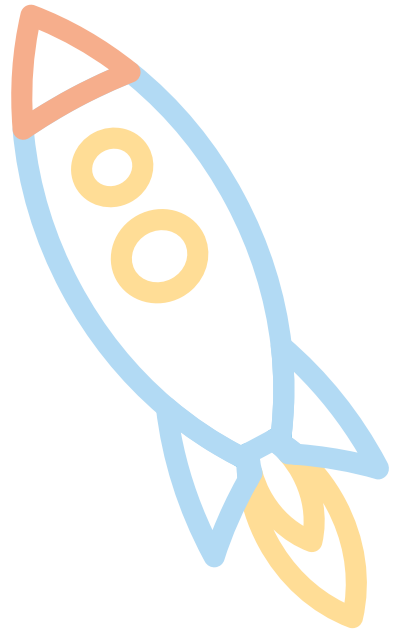
Latex allergy

Information for patients and carers



Leeds children's
hospital

caring about children



Latex Allergy

Latex (natural rubber) is the common name for the sap produced by many plants. However, it is the latex that comes from the rubber tree *Hevea Braziliensis* that causes allergy. This is often referred to as **Natural Rubber Latex (NRL)**.

Both children and adults can be affected by latex allergy.

Groups who are particularly at risk include health care workers and people who have repeated surgery, because of their increased exposure to latex. The condition is more common in atopic people (those who have a tendency to develop allergies).

Reactions to latex

There are two types of allergic reactions to latex. These are known as Type 1 and Type 4 reactions:

Type 1 is an **immediate** reaction. Those affected are sensitive to the natural proteins in latex.

Mild symptoms may include:

- Nasal irritation
- Itching
- Redness of the skin
- Urticaria (nettle rash or hives)
- Swelling
- Cough

Severe symptoms may include:

- Wheeze
- Anaphylaxis (throat swelling / choking, breathing difficulty and collapse)

People at risk of severe reactions should carry an adrenaline auto-injector at all times in order to treat a severe reaction.

If you have been told you need an adrenaline auto-injector, you should have been shown how to use it. If you have not been shown how to use your adrenaline auto-injector, please contact the Children's Allergy Nurses. If you use an adrenaline auto-injector for a severe allergic reaction you must always call an ambulance after using the adrenaline auto-injector.

You should also carry an antihistamine to treat mild reactions.

Type 4 is a delayed reaction and affects the skin and causes contact dermatitis or eczema.

Symptoms include reddening, itching and swelling of the skin developing 6 hours and up to 2 days after contact, usually in the area which had the contact.

Management of latex allergy

People who are allergic to latex may react to the following:

- Rubber gloves
- Balloons
- Rubber toys
- Rubber bands
- Pencil erasers

- Elastic used in clothing
- Latex mattresses and pillows
- Baby teats and dummies / pacifiers
- Sports equipment (e.g. hand grips, gym mats)
- Swimming caps and goggles
- Adhesives (stickers, glues, sticky tapes, envelopes)
- Condoms and the diaphragm / cap

Most people with latex allergy will not react to dry rubber latex such as shoe soles, tyres and water bottles.

Some people with mild latex allergy may be able to use some latex products. They may also be able to use some brands of products and not others as different companies will use varying manufacturing processes that alter the nature of the latex protein.

People with severe allergy should not use any latex products.

Latex allergy in nursery and school

It is important to discuss your child's latex allergy with the nursery leader, classroom teacher or head teacher. It is necessary they are prepared ahead of time to help prevent your child coming into contact with products containing latex.

It is useful if attention is focused on the following areas:

- Classroom
- Playground environment
- Sports / PE Equipment

- First Aid / Medical / Dental Treatment
- Emergency Medication

For more detailed information, please contact Anaphylaxis Campaign (details on page 7).

Latex and fruit allergy

Some people allergic to latex also experience reactions to some foods. These may include fruits such as banana, avocado, kiwi and chestnut. This is because proteins in these foods are similar to those in latex and can therefore cause a reaction. If you/your child currently eat these foods without any problems, please continue to do so.

Inform people about your allergy

Whether you/your child have Type 1 or Type 4 reactions to latex, it is essential that you inform people about your allergy particularly medical and health care professionals such as the dentist, GP or hospital staff.

If you are having any kind of surgery or procedure it is essential that you inform health care professionals about your latex allergy.

Latex is in many medical items including catheters, some syringes, anaesthetic mouthpieces, elasticated bandages, sterile gloves, intravenous tubing, wound drains, electrode pads and protective sheets. If medical staff are aware of you/your child's allergy, there are alternatives that can be used.

There are also alternatives to everyday latex items. For example, latex free condoms are available.

Remember - Be prepared. Have the rescue medicines (antihistamine & adrenaline auto-injector) readily available at all times!

Make sure your friends and family know how to manage an allergic reaction.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Children's Allergy Nurses

Telephone: **(0113) 392 2257**

Email: **leedsth-tr.allergy@nhs.net**

Webpage:

www.leedsth.nhs.uk/a-z-of-services/childrens-allergy-service/

Further Information:

Anaphylaxis Campaign – www.anaphylaxis.org.uk

Allergy UK – www.allergyuk.org



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