



Express Eddie's Toolbox



Understanding Latex, Latex Allergies, And Reducing Latex Reactions

Healthcare providers, laboratory employees, housekeeping staff, and many other workers rely on latex gloves for protection, and latex gloves to effectively safeguard against infectious materials. Natural rubber latex is a material made from a milky fluid that comes from rubber trees. While many synthetically produced rubbers are also referred to as latex, these rubbers do not release the proteins that cause allergic reactions.



According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), workers regularly exposed to latex can be at risk of developing a latex allergy, and the more often employees are exposed, the more likely a latex sensitivity could develop.

Latex exposure is not limited to skin contact, – it can also be inhaled. Latex proteins attach to powders inside gloves and become airborne when the gloves are removed. Once a person develops an allergy, reaction times vary, but usually occur within minutes of skin contact or inhalation.

NIOSH offers the following advice for helping to reduce workplace latex exposure and reactions:

- Choose [disposable gloves](#) made from materials other than latex, such as [nitrile gloves](#), vinyl gloves, or polyethylene gloves
- When handling infectious materials, employees must use proper barrier protection. If [latex gloves](#) are the best choice, select powder-free gloves that have reduced protein content. Gloves without powder decrease exposure to latex protein and help prevent allergic reactions
- Avoid using oil-based hand lotions when wearing latex gloves. Contact with oil-based creams can result in glove deterioration that can increase the risk of a latex reaction
- After taking off latex gloves, use a mild soap to wash hands, drying them thoroughly
- Frequently clean work areas exposed to dust containing latex
- Know the symptoms of an allergic reaction to latex, which can include: hives, rashes, itching, flushing, asthma, and eye, nose, or sinus symptoms. In rare occasions, people with latex allergies can go into shock

Work Safety and Protection content provided by



Understanding Latex, Latex Allergies, And Reducing Latex Reactions

- Train workers to understand latex allergies, the signs and symptoms, and how to prevent reactions
- Employees with known latex allergies should notify their employers and can also wear medical bracelets to alert coworkers in the event of a serious reaction

[Gloves](#) are an important part of many workplace safety programs. Protect against the spread of infectious diseases and reduce the risk of allergic reactions by providing appropriate hand protection and training employees on the risks of latex allergies.

Article from:

Northern Safety Co. Inc.

(<https://www.northernsafety.com/News/Article/270/Understanding-latex-latex-allergies-and-reducing-latex-reactions>)

Woodworker Express is a distributor of Northern Safety Co. Inc. products.

Work Safety and Protection content provided by

