Latex allergy (immediate hypersensitivity) can be a more serious reaction to latex than contact dermatitis or allergic contact dermatitis. Certain proteins in latex may cause sensitization (positive blood or skin test, with or without symptoms). Although the amount of exposure needed to cause sensitization or symptoms is not known, exposures at even very low levels can trigger allergic reactions in some sensitized individuals.

Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure to latex, but they can occur hours later and produce various symptoms. Mild reactions to latex involve skin redness, hives, or itching. More severe reactions may involve respiratory symptoms such as a runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes, scratchy throat, and asthma (difficult breathing, coughing spells, and wheezing). Rarely, shock may occur: but a life threatening reaction is seldom the first sign of latex allergy. Such reactions are similar to those seen in some allergic persons after a bee sting.

**GUIDELINES:**

- Avoid all forms of exposure to latex. *(see attachment)*
- Inform department manager and MHS Employee Health of your allergic reaction.
- Follow MHS Employee Health protocol for Type I latex allergy reaction.
- Wear a Medic-Alert bracelet to indicate allergy.
- Carry or have available epinephrine self-injection kit if indicated by physician.
- Carry non-latex gloves and emergency medical instructions.
- Avoid areas where you might inhale the powder from the latex gloves worn by others.
- Beware of the risk of increasing reaction if exposure to high levels of latex continues.
Latex products are manufactured from a milky fluid derived from the rubber tree, *Hevea brasiliensis*. Several chemicals are added to this fluid during the processing and manufacture of commercial latex. Some proteins in latex can cause a range of mild to severe allergic reactions. Currently available methods of measurement do not provide easy or consistent identification of allergy-causing proteins (antigens) and their concentrations. Until well accepted standardized tests are available, total protein serves as a useful indicator of the exposure or concern. [Beezhold et al. 1996a]. The chemicals added during processing may also cause skin rashes. Several types of synthetic rubber are also referred to as “latex,” but these do not release the proteins that cause allergic reactions.

**Products Containing Latex**

A wide variety of products contain latex: medical supplies, personal protective equipment, and numerous household objects. Most people who encounter latex products only through their general use in society have no health problems from the use of these products. Workers who repeatedly use latex products are the focus of this Alert. The following are examples of products that may contain latex:

**Emergency Equipment**
- Blood pressure cuffs
- Stethoscopes
- Disposable gloves
- Oral and nasal airways
- Endotracheal tubes
- Tourniquets
- Intravenous tubing
- Syringes
- Electrode pads

**Personal Protective Equipment**
- Gloves
- Surgical masks
- Goggles
- Respirators
- Rubber aprons

**Office Supplies**
- Rubber bands
- Erasers

**Hospital Supplies**
- Anesthesia masks
- Catheters
- Wound drains
- Injection ports
- Rubber tops of multidose vials
- Dental dams

**Household Objects**
- Automobile tires
- Motorcycle and bicycle handgrips
- Carpeting
- Swimming goggles
- Racquet handles
- Shoe soles
- Expandable fabric (waistbands)
- Dishwashing gloves
- Hot water bottles
- Condoms
- Diaphragms
- Balloons
- Pacifiers
- Baby bottle nipples
## COMMON PRODUCTS WHICH MAY CONTAIN LATEX

### MEDICAL PRODUCTS
- Urinary catheters
- Stethoscope tubing
- Endotracheal tubes
- Piggy-back IV ports
- Tourniquets
- EKG straps
- EKG electrode pads
- Penrose drains
- Ambu bags
- Ventilator bellows
- Masks (anesthesia, oxygen)
- Gloves
- Adhesive tapes
- Multiple-use medication vials
- Blood pressure cuffs
- Nasal airways
- Elastic bandages
- Dental dams
- Elastic on surgical bonnets/
  - Surgical shoe covers
- Auxiliary pads on crutches
- Wheelchair cushions (Roho)
- Wheelchair tires

### HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS
- Rubber toys
- Balloons
- Cleaning gloves
- Electricians gloves
- Condoms
- Diaphragms
- Shower curtains
- Pacifiers
- Shower mats
- Baby bottles
- Elastic waist bands
- Elasticized fabrics
- Adhesives
- Hot water bottles
- Sport racquet handles
- Carpet backing
- Rubber bands
- Toy balls
- Rubberized bed sheets
- Rubber mats
- Swim caps/goggle straps
- Band-Aids
- Some tires