



Latex Gloves- Restrictions & Guidelines

Concern over the increasing incidence of natural rubber latex allergies among the general population has prompted the decision to no longer stock latex gloves in Central Stores. The use of latex alternatives will help lessen the chances of adverse health effects occurring due to airborne latex particles. Your cooperation in using non-latex gloves is greatly appreciated. This restriction is not a ban on the use of latex glove. **Latex glove use may be allowed when it is prudent for the safety of workers and when the following guidelines are met.**

Guidelines:

1. *Powdered* latex gloves should never be used on campus. We strongly recommend that latex-alternative gloves be used universally throughout the campus, including contracted services, unless a significant, scientifically-based rationale compels the use of latex within specific departments.
 2. Laboratory use of latex gloves must be researched prior to actual use. It is apparent that for some solvents (e.g. acetone), rubber/latex is the glove material which offers the most protection. Nitrile gloves offer protection for more solvents. Therefore, it is likely that for some laboratories, there will be both boxes of disposable gloves on the lab bench. This may be problematic for two reasons: (a) there may be someone in the lab who does have a latex allergy--**the laboratory's Chemical Hygiene Officer should determine if there is anyone with the allergy BEFORE ordering latex gloves**; and (b) having two different boxes of disposable gloves may lead to substitution of one over the other, without first checking the Permeation/Degradation ratings--this could lead to exposure via absorption for certain solvents.
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Latex Facts:

- Latex allergy is an increasing problem in the workplace. Workers have had to leave jobs and change careers because of latex allergies. Aside from the obvious health concerns, this can be a very expensive workers' compensation issue.
- According to the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, up to 17% of healthcare workers have latex allergies. At risk jobs include health care workers, laboratory technicians, housekeeping staff and food handlers.
- Workers regularly exposed to latex have been found to eventually develop sensitivity to latex. Individuals with certain food allergies are at increased risk of developing latex sensitivity. The



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more time spent wearing latex gloves, the greater the likelihood of becoming allergic. There is no known safe exposure level of latex to prevent sensitization from occurring.

- Latex allergy is an abnormal immunologic response to the protein in rubber. Symptoms range from rashes to anaphylaxis (a rapid, life-threatening allergic reaction). Allergy to latex has been linked to an increase of occupational asthma.
- Powdered latex gloves are particularly problematic. When powdered latex gloves are put on and taken off, the powder (with latex protein attached) is aerosolized and can be inhaled by users of the gloves, as well as individuals within the same area. The inhalation of latex particles is a much more dangerous form of exposure than a direct skin exposure to latex gloves. There have been hospital-based studies of latex particles in operating rooms that demonstrate that these particles can remain aloft in air for hours after the gloves were used.

Other Points to Consider:

- Vinyl gloves are an excellent and inexpensive choice for food service workers, childcare workers, certain laboratories, and lower risk medical situations. Vinyl gloves do not, however, offer the same level of protection against HIV as latex gloves.
- Nitrile and neoprene are excellent alternatives to latex gloves. They provide the same degree of protection against HIV and other biological agents.
- Most hospitals and many research facilities have eliminated latex gloves. With careful investigation, alternatives that are just as protective and flexible can be found. Surgeons performing delicate procedures on humans have learned to work with alternatives.
- The University of Connecticut Student Health Services has changed to a latex-safe environment.

Please refer to <http://www.stores.uconn.edu/> for a current listing of disposable non-latex, vinyl, and nitrile glove alternatives stocked by UConn Central Stores.