

## Latex Gloves

Latex gloves are an effective barrier to prevent the transmission of many infectious diseases. However, some individuals develop allergies through direct contact or inhalation of natural rubber latex proteins in gloves upon single or recurrent usage. Individuals sensitized to the latex protein can exhibit skin redness, itching, rash, or hives. More severe symptoms include cough, difficulty breathing, itchy and watery eyes, runny nose, scratchy throat, sneezing, and wheezing. In severe reactions, exposed individuals may experience anaphylaxis, a potentially life-threatening condition that can cause throat swelling, severe difficulty breathing and/or swallowing, lightheadedness, and nausea/vomiting. Depending on the level of sensitivity, symptoms may occur within minutes to hours of exposure. Individuals with an elevated risk of developing a latex allergy include those who have:

- Spina bifida (a birth defect that affects the development of the spine)
- A family history of allergies, asthma, or eczema
- Food allergies to avocados, bananas, chestnuts, kiwis, or passion fruit
- Worked in rubber industries
- Undergone multiple medical surgeries or procedures

Due to the increasing incidence of natural rubber latex allergies, Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) recommends using only non-latex gloves in research and teaching laboratories. If latex gloves are required for work with a specific chemical or infectious material and indicated in the safety data sheet (SDS), contact EHS prior to procurement to see if a suitable alternative is available. If the principal investigator/lab manager and EHS determine latex gloves to be the best option, individuals must comply with the following practices:

- Use latex gloves only when handling the specific, approved chemical or infectious material.
- Use only powder-free latex gloves with reduced protein content.
- Avoid using oil-based hand creams or lotions which can cause glove deterioration, unless specifically proven to maintain personal protection and glove integrity.
- Clean work areas frequently where latex gloves have been used.
- Contact EHS if any symptoms of a latex allergy are observed.

**References:** Mayo Clinic. Latex Allergy.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/latex-allergy/symptoms-causes/syc-20374287>

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