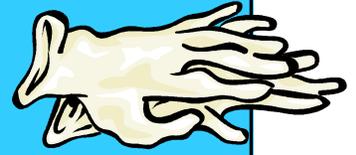


# Latex Allergy Prevention



## What is Latex?

Natural rubber latex is a material extracted from plants, such as rubber trees, that is used in the manufacture of rubber. It is used because of its elastomeric, or 'stretchy,' qualities. You may know that natural rubber latex is used to make gloves, and you may even use latex-containing gloves for your job.

The allergy or sensitivity that some people have is due to the protein found in natural rubber latex. You are susceptible to developing an allergy to latex if you: routinely wear latex gloves, have had multiple surgeries, have allergic conditions like eczema, hay fever and asthma, and if you have food allergies to bananas, avocado, chestnuts, and kiwi.



## How can you reduce your risk of developing an allergy to latex?

One way is by avoiding exposure

*(Continued on page 3)*



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## Shared Successes

The following are interesting progress notes from SafetyTeam members' activities:

- Employees expressed concern over odors coming from white board cleaner. The white board cleaner's use was promptly discontinued.
- Mold growth on the bus stop tents outside the BICC was cleaned off!

Please continue to submit your monthly member update forms so that your safety concerns continue to be addressed. Don't forget to answer the Question of the Month, where correct answers will earn you valuable SafetyPoints!

Prizes are available for the points you have earned. There are several of you with very high point totals!

*Thanks members... be safe!*



## Topic of the Month

This month's specialized training topic is a discussion of **Fire Safety and Evacuation** including the essential fire safety basics.



With the ban of tobacco products from OHSU buildings, our primary concern is fire started by **faulty or misused electrical devices and equipment**. It is your job to ensure that all equipment is in good working order. You must remove faulty equipment from service and immediately report it for repair. Watch for frayed or loose cord connections, inaccurate thermostats, and abnormal sounds and excessive heat production while in operation. Also, pay close attention to the area of use: keep electric devices away from combustibles!

Remember that extension cords may only be used for temporary power needs. Power strips are acceptable for long-term use, but only for current devices. Those used in Hospital Grade plugs (look for the green dot) must have the same rating.

### Response to Fire - RACE

- **Rescue** anyone from immediate danger.
- **Activate** the alarm at the nearest pull station, and call 4-4444 (9-911 if off-campus).
- **Close** all windows and doors in the area. This helps contain fire, smoke and fumes.
- **Evacuate** (non-patient care buildings) **OR** Defend-in-Place (patient care buildings).

### Fire Alarm

If you hear a fire alarm, and the fire is not in your area, follow instructions for your building and your work area:

#### Academic/Research/Administration Buildings:

- Close all windows and doors.
- Instruct visitors on procedures.

- Evacuate the entire building by following exit signs down rated stairs and out exits.

#### Hospital/Clinic Patient Care Buildings:

- Close all windows and doors.
- Reassure patients and visitors.
- Be ready to evacuate, but only if instructed. Otherwise, stay where you are. If evacuation becomes necessary, managers or charge personnel will give the order.
- Listen for the "all clear" to resume normal activities.

### Area of Rescue

If you need to evacuate and have a physical disability that prevents you from taking the stairs, the place to wait for help is the stair side of stairway landings. Responding firefighters check these areas first for those in need of assistance.

### Fire Extinguisher

OHSU does not expect you to fight a fire in your work area. However, we do provide fire extinguishers for those who choose to use them. Do NOT use one if you have any doubts!

Training is required for all Hospitals and Clinics employees at least annually, and at least once during employment for all other employees. Contact Environmental Health and Radiation Safety (503 494-7795) for live classes and online training options.

**Report fires and other  
emergencies to Public Safety  
503 494-4444**

**Off Marquam Hill?  
9-911**

(Latex Allergy Prevention - continued from page 1)

to latex-containing products. Many consumer and medical products contain latex, so complete avoidance may be very difficult. Another way to reduce exposure is to avoid using latex-containing materials when not needed. You can also substitute a latex containing product with one that has no latex. A good substitution for latex gloves is nitrile gloves. Nitrile gloves are widely used, instead of latex gloves, throughout OHSU Hospitals and Clinics and Research areas.

If natural rubber latex products must be used, do so only when absolutely necessary and minimize the time spent using them. Always wash your hands as soon as possible after wearing the gloves to wash the natural rubber latex proteins off your hands. Also try to buy gloves that have a low protein content and are powder free. Powder in latex gloves can include the protein that can cause allergy, and can be sent airborne when gloves are put on or taken off.

OHSU uses various natural rubber latex products used including: gloves, catheters, tubing, tape and rubber bands, boots, respirators, bandages and erasers. At home, items that may contain latex are: baby bottle nipples, diapers, teething rings, handles on sports equipment, balloons, balls, toys, and exercise stretch bands. Latex balloons are prohibited in OHSU Hospitals and Clinics.

The latex paint used at OHSU does not contain natural rubber latex. It can contain



## Q of M Answer!

Last month's Question of the Month was from the Focus Topic, "Near Misses."

The question was, **"What information must be on a secondary container label?"**

**1. Product Identity**-name of what's inside

**2. Health Effects**-basic risk information

Thank you to everyone who participated! If you answered correctly, you earned 1 SafetyPoint! Contact Kristine Abrahamson at 503 494-0215 for answers to your questions.

synthetic rubber, but this does not contain the proteins responsible for causing a latex allergy.



Only a medical professional can determine for sure that an allergic reaction is due to natural rubber latex protein. People are often allergic to the chemical additives in gloves in addition to, or instead of, the latex. If you suspect you are allergic to latex, you should be evaluated by a medical professional.

**Have a Question?  
Call Environmental Health and  
Radiation Safety at:**

**503-494-7795**



## Slow down in Construction Work Zones!

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### Question of the Month

The question of the Month is designed to challenge your safety knowledge and give you a chance to earn some cool, free stuff!



#### QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What does the acronym RACE stand for?

Write your answer to the question in the appropriate box on your SafetyTeam Member Update form. Correct answers to this month's Question will earn 1 SafetyPoint.

If you are not currently a SafetyTeam member and would like to participate, contact Kristine Abrahamson, SafetyTeam Coordinator at 503 494-7795.

# OHSU

OHSU includes four schools; two hospitals; numerous primary care and specialty clinics; multiple research institutes; and several public service and outreach units. OHSU is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution.

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