

# Natural Rubber Latex Allergy

Natural rubber latex is a kind of rubber obtained from the sap of rubber tree plants. Because it is very elastic, it can be easily made into a variety of medical products and everyday items. Anyone who uses these products may develop an allergy to proteins originating from the rubber tree or to chemicals used when the product is made. Recently, latex allergy has become more common. Fortunately, now it is more easily identified and understood.

Latex allergy is often characterized by itching, flushing, watery eyes or a rash. Hives or swelling may occur in the area touched by latex. More seriously, severely low blood pressure and/or swelling of the airway may result, causing problems with breathing. This is called an anaphylactic reaction and can cause death if not treated.

An allergic reaction can happen suddenly even if you have been exposed to latex products previously and not had any problems. A reaction is more likely to occur when latex comes in contact with mucous membranes such as those in the mouth, urinary tract or rectal area.

People with spina bifida seem to have a high risk of developing latex allergy. Although the reason is unclear, this may be due to frequent contact with latex products such as urinary catheters and surgical gloves. Other patients with a high risk of developing latex allergy include those who:

- Have been diagnosed with a spinal cord injury
- Have had six or more surgeries
- Have had long-term catheter use
- Have food allergies to avocado, banana, kiwi, papaya, passion fruit, chestnuts, peaches or tomatoes
- Have been exposed to frequent use of latex gloves/products
- Have extrophy of the bladder

Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare has reduced its use of latex and uses non-latex gloves, catheters and other medical equipment for all latex-allergic and high-risk patients. We recommend that non-latex products routinely be used at home, work, etc., if possible, for people in the high-risk group even if they have not had a reaction to latex.

Familiarize all of your health professionals, dentists, therapists, home nurses and care providers with latex precautions and latex allergy. A latex allergy wallet identification card is available from Gillette clinic nurses. If you have experienced a latex reaction, your doctor may want you to consider an Epi-pen® (bee sting kit) and a medical alert bracelet.

Latex is commonly found in the hospital, doctor's office, dentist's office, home and community. The following lists of latex/latex-free products are taken from a Spina Bifida Association of America publication. This is a sample listing of common products containing latex. You can find more complete listings from the Spina Bifida Association at [www.sbaa.org](http://www.sbaa.org). If there is any question about whether a product contains latex, contact the product manufacturer.

## **Latex in the Home and Community**

## **Might Contain Latex**

Art supplies: paints, glue, erasers, fabric paints

Rubber balloons

Balls: Koosh, tennis, bowling

Carpet backing, gym floor, basement sealant

Clothes: appliqué on T-shirts; elastic on socks, underwear; soles on sneakers, sandals

Elastic - on clothing, diapers

Feeding nipples

Handles on racquets, tools

Pacifiers

Latex paint

Rubber bands, bungee cords

Toys - Stretch Armstrong, old Barbies

Water toys/equipment: masks, bathing suits, caps, scuba gear, goggles

## **Safe Alternatives**

Look for latex-free brands - Elmers (school glue, Glue-All, GluColors, carpenters wood glue, Sno-Drift paste), FaberCastel art erasers, Crayola products (except for rubber stamps, erasers). Liquitex paints.

Mylar balloons

Plastic or vinyl

Provide barrier - cloth or mat

Cloth-covered elastic, neoprene (Decent Exposures, NOLATEX Industries)

Cloth, Velcro

Selected Gerber, Evenflo, MAM, Ross Mead Johnson nipples

Use vinyl, leather, or cover with cloth/tape

Soothies (Children's Med Ventures), selected Binky, Gerber, Infa, Kip, MAM

Avoid skin contact and inhalation

Plastic bands, string

Jurassic Park figures (Kenner), 1993 Barbie, Disney dolls (Mattel), many toys by Fisher Price, Little Tikes, Playschool, Discovery, Trolls (Norfin)

PVC, plastic, nylon

Zippered plastic storage bags	Waxed paper, plain plastic bags
Band-Aids	Gauze with plastic tape, 3M Active strips (latex in pkg)
Bed protectors (washable rubber)	Disposable underpads
Blood pressure cuff	Use over clothing
Catheters (rubber - Baxter, Bard)	Silicone (Kendall, Argyle), Plastic (Mentor, Bard)
Crutches: tips, axillary pads, handgrips	Cover with cloth, nonlatex tape
Dental dams, cups, bands, root canal material, orthodontic rubber bands	PURO/M27 intraoral elastics (Midwest Ortho), wire springs, dental sealant (Delton), dams (Meer Dental), John O. Buttler Co.
Dressings: Dyna-flex (J&J), BDF Elastoplast ActionWrap, Coban (3M), Butterfly closures	Duoderm (Squibb), Opsite NOTE: Steri-strips, Tegaderm, Tegisorb (3MO, have latex in package).
Elastic bandage (Ace Wrap)	Elastic bandage by TENS or Baster, or cloth
Electrode bulbs, pads, grounding	Selected Baxter, Dantec EMG, Conmed, ValleyLab, Vermont Med
Endotracheal tubes, airways	Selected Berman, Mallenckrodt, Polamedco, Portex, Rusch, Sheridan, Shiley
Enemas, Ready-to-use (Fleet-latex valve)	Glycerin, BabyLax (Fleet), Theravac, Bowel Management Tube (MIC) cone irrigation set (Convatec)
G-tubes, buttons	Silicone (Bard, MIC, Stomate)
Gloves, sterile, clean, surgical, latex	Vinyl, neoprene, polymer gloves
Moleskin	Adhesive felt (Acme)

Oxygen masks, cannulas	Remove elastic bands; check valve content
Reflex hammers	Cover with plastic bag
Stethoscope tubing	Do not let tubing touch child
Suction tubing	Davel, Mallenckrodt, Yankau suction catheters
Syringes	Some BD syringes Abbott PCA Abboject, Norm-Ject (Air-Tite), EpiPen
Tapes: pink, Waterproof (3M), zonas, Moleskin, Waterproof (J&J), adhesive felt (Acme)	Dermaclear, Dermicel, Waterproof (J&J), Durapore, Microfoam, Micropore, Transpore (3M), Mastisol liquid adhesive
Tourniquet (for blood drawing)	Place over clothing or Children's Med Ventures, Grafco, VelcroPedic, X-Tourn straps (Avcor)
Wheelchair cushions (ROHO)	Cover with cloth

[Make An Appointment](#) [651-290-8707](tel:651-290-8707) [Refer a Patient](#) [651-325-2200](tel:651-325-2200)

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](tel:651-229-3890).