



# Loss Control Insights

## Latex Allergy

When visiting one of the members I heard yet another story about an employee's hypersensitivity, this time it was to latex. A new seasonal worker was assigned the task of painting and had a severe allergic reaction when using latex gloves. He had never had a reaction in the past; thankfully his supervisor was on site and administered the proper first aid. Latex allergies can be life threatening.

The following are some basic facts about latex allergies.

### What causes latex allergy?

Latex allergy reactions result from exposure to either the proteins or chemicals found in natural rubber latex products. The proteins may also adhere to the powder used on some gloves to make them easier to put on and take off. Regular and repeated use of latex gloves can result in the wearer becoming highly sensitive to the proteins or chemicals found in any latex product.

### What are the symptoms of latex allergy?



Symptoms of latex allergy can include skin rash and irritation, hives, nasal congestion, asthma, and in rare instances, shock. Individuals who develop an allergy to latex may also have similar cross-reactions to certain foods (e.g., avocado, banana, potato, tomato, kiwi fruit and papaya). Individuals prone to allergy are at greatest risk for developing an allergy to latex.

There can be a delayed reaction where symptoms can show up anywhere from 12-36 hours later. The redness and swelling may cover more parts of your body, and you may have crusty sores or blisters. These symptoms aren't usually dangerous, but may require medical attention.

If you have a severe reaction it can be life threatening so if you have an epinephrine auto-injector, use it and then call 911. You still need to seek treatment even if the shot worked. If you've had a severe reaction in the past, ask your doctor if you need to carry an anaphylaxis kit with an epinephrine shot. If so, always have two injectors with you. Wear a medical alert bracelet, necklace, or other tag. That will help treat you as quickly as possible.

### Latex allergy prevention

In many instances, depending on the exposure, workers can get the required level of protection from nitrile, vinyl or other synthetic gloves. When latex gloves are used, powder-free gloves with reduced protein content should be used. It is important to keep in mind that the Bloodborne

Pathogen Standard states that glove alternatives shall be accessible to those employees who are allergic to the gloves normally provided.