

Latex Allergy

Special Considerations Related to the COVID-19 Outbreak

Allergy & Asthma Network is committed to getting information into the hands of our patients and stakeholders during this uncertain time of the COVID-19 crisis. We offer the answers to some frequently asked questions during this time.

The Coronavirus pandemic, or COVID-19, is taking a toll on the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), including N95 masks, eyewear and gloves. With the increasing demand for gloves by medical professionals and the public at large, will this lead to a resurgence in use of latex gloves?

This need for PPE has the potential to create problems for those individuals who are latex-allergic and those individuals who could unwittingly develop a latex allergy from repetitive use of latex gloves.

In the 1980s, there was an increased demand for latex gloves to protect healthcare workers. This resulted in an epidemic of latex allergy. Individuals who became allergic to latex experienced various symptoms ranging from contact dermatitis, runny, itchy, watery eyes and nose as well as asthma and anaphylaxis. Many in the healthcare field were adversely affected.

It is important that we do not forget the lessons we learned in the 1980s and '90s as to the potential of developing latex allergy and preventing exposure to the already latex-allergic individual.

The following recommendations should be followed by those who are already latex-allergic. It is advisable to always carry a bag or backpack that contains your needed supplies.

1. Wear your medical alert bracelet at all times
2. Carry your own gloves – nitrile or vinyl gloves
3. Keep a twin-pack of epinephrine auto-injectors if you have experienced anaphylaxis in the past
4. Alert all medical professionals about your allergy
 - Carry a card with you that provides a history of your latex allergy and your doctor's contact information in the event of an emergency

It is important that we all educate the community and the current glove consumer about the potential to develop an allergy to latex.

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For more resources on latex allergy, visit Allergy & Asthma Network's Latex Allergy Toolbox at:
<https://www.allergyasthmanetwork.org/education/allergies/latex-allergy/>