

ALLERGY TO LATEX

Information for School Staff

1. What exactly is latex?

Latex is a milky sap from the commercial rubber tree. The following items are manufactured from latex: rubber nipples, pacifiers, balloons, rubber gloves, condoms, diaphragms, catheters, hydrocephalus shunts, dental dams, and some toys and sports equipment.

2. How prevalent is latex allergy?

It is fairly rare in the general population. It is more common among health care workers. It is extremely common in children with spina bifida and myelodysplasia. There is a skin test, performed by allergists, available to document latex allergy.

3. What are the symptoms of latex allergy?

Symptoms vary. They include: systemic urticaria, rhinitis, conjunctivitis, bronchospasm and anaphylaxis. Direct mucosal and parenteral (IV, etc.) exposure poses a far greater risk for an anaphylactic reaction than cutaneous and respiratory exposure. Exposure to latex through a Barium enema has been largely responsible for deaths associated with this allergy.

4. Recommended school policy.

- a. Questions about latex allergy should be routinely included in the nurse's history for all students requiring a medical procedure or daily care in school that exposes them to latex. This information should be recorded in the "Nurse Assessment Report."
- b. Any student or staff member with a documented latex allergy (by skin test) is recommended to wear a medic alert bracelet and have a prescribed Epi-Pen.
- c. A detailed latex avoidance plan should be arranged by the school nurse in conjunction with the school physician and the student's physician whenever medical procedures need to be performed for a student with a documented latex allergy.
- d. Exposure to latex gloves and other latex materials should be avoided in all students with spina bifida, regardless of their history for latex allergy.
- e. School nurses and other health staff with documented allergy to latex should make appropriate arrangements with their own physician and the district central office so that latex exposure is avoided while carrying out their duties.

APPROVED,

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