Latex Allergy

Introduction

What is Latex?
Latex, otherwise known as natural rubber latex, comes from the rubber tree Hevea Brasiliensis. It is the protein from this plant that can cause an allergic reaction.

What is Latex Allergy?
Some people are allergic to the protein in latex which is the substance that makes latex so elastic. Therefore, products which are stretchy, like balloons and gloves, are more likely to cause an allergic reaction than products which are solid, like car tyres.

Types of reaction
There are four types of reaction but the two main ones are:

Type 1: This reaction usually occurs within one hour. The symptoms can be as follows: itching of exposed skin, general or localized rash, watery eyes and/or runny nose, swelling, wheezing or difficulty in breathing.

Type 4: Otherwise known as delayed hypersensitivity and is not an immediate reaction. This can cause contact dermatitis (usually within 6 – 48 hours). The symptoms are as follows: itchiness of skin, redness, swelling and worsening of eczema.

Cross reactivity
In some patients the protein in the rubber reacts with the food sensitive groups. These include: banana, kiwi, avocado, hazelnut and strawberry. However, if you have previously eaten these foods and have not experienced any symptoms, then you should continue to eat them.

What contains Latex?
Latex can be found anywhere but be more careful in the following places: Hospitals, Dental surgeries, Garages and Hairdressers. However, it is important that you inform your doctor and dentist, so that they are able to provide an alternative for you. What you do will depend on the severity of your reaction to latex, this will be discussed with you in clinic.
What should I do when I go on holiday?

Inform the airline that you have a latex allergy. If type 1 (acute) reaction, please ensure that you have your emergency medication and a copy of your treatment plan with you at all times. Some children with acute (type 1) reactions with breathing problems may require an EpiPen. You will need to obtain a letter from your hospital consultant stating that the Epinephrine Epipen is required in an emergency. Some patients are advised to carry around a pair of large size non-rubber sterile surgical gloves in case of emergency.

For extra support, Allergy UK can provide you with a translation card that states the nature of your child’s allergy, and the treatments needed, in common holiday destination languages. Keep this with you at all times so that you can communicate if an emergency happens.

Again, check the whereabouts of the nearest hospital and ensure that you have an emergency medication and treatment plan with you. Also a pack that contains latex-free products, your specialist allergy centre may be able to help you with this.

Vaccinations

The equipment used in vaccinations has rubber bungs and this will need to be removed. Some vaccinations have a synthetic bung. This should be discussed with your doctor prior to the injection.

Common equipment

You may have to check the following items for latex.

**Babies** - Nappies, dummies, teats, toys, a changing mat, spoons and feeding cups.

**Children** - School equipment, sports equipment, glues, tapes and plasters, hair accessories, balloons, erasers, wellington boots, swimming goggles and swimming hats.

**Teenagers** - Cosmetics, sports equipment, contraceptive devices, lycra and hair accessories.

If you are allergic to latex, it is important that you wear a MedicAlert bracelet or necklace. These are pieces of jewellery containing a telephone number which any doctor can ring to find out about your medical conditions. This avoids you being mistakenly treated using products containing latex.
Support

Latex Allergy Support Group
PO Box 27, Filey YO14 9YH
Helpline: 07071 225838

The Anaphylaxis Campaign
PO Box 149, Fleet, Hampshire GU13 0FA
Helpline: 01252 542029

MedicAlert
1 Bridge Wharf, 156 Caledonian Road, London N1 9UU
Helpline: 0800 581 420

Allergy UK
Deepdene House, 30 Bellegrove Road, Welling,
Kent DA16 3PY
Helpline: 020 8303 8525

Web Addresses
www.latexallergyhelp.com
www.anaphylaxis.org.uk
www.allergyuk.org

References

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Johnson, G. Latex Allergy: Reducing the risks Nursing Times 1998; 94 (44) 69-71
Meeropol, E. The RUBBER Tool: Screening Children for Latex Allergy
Niggemann, B. Breiteneder, H Latex Allergy in Children. International Archives of Allergy & Immunology 2000; 121: 98-107
Phillip, K. Latex Allergy: A Review Journal of Emergency Nursing 1997; 23 (1) 27-36
Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format. Please contact: 01895 279973

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Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem informacji pacjenta (patient information) pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973.

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973查詢。

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