



# Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center

## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**SUBJECT: CARE MANAGEMENT OF THE PATIENT  
WITH LATEX ALLERGY OR SENSITIVITY**

**Latex Allergy or Sensitivity Management**

**Policy No.: B854**

**Supersedes: March 1, 2016**

**Revision Date: February 21, 2023**

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Natural latex is the milky sap obtained from the rubber (*Hevea Brasillensis*) tree. Following exposure to latex, the patient becomes sensitive to an antigen, which occurs naturally in latex. Re-exposure to the specific allergen stimulates IgE (Immunoglobulin E), which in turn produces a local or systemic histamine release. Persons at risk include health care workers; patients with spinal injuries or myelodysplasia, spina bifida, meningomyelocele; patients with chronic illness; patients requiring frequent urinary catheterization; and individuals with a history of sensitivity to rubber products. Symptoms can range from urticaria to anaphylactic shock. While urticaria is most common, airborne latex particles (such as powder from latex gloves) can also cause rhinitis, conjunctivitis, wheezing, and bronchospasm.

### **POLICY STATEMENTS:**

Latex safe environments will be provided for latex allergic or sensitive patients.

### **PURPOSE:**

To inform health care workers of the availability of latex free products and to provide guidelines for the use of multiple patient care products with patients who have a known latex sensitivity or allergy.

**Physician's Order Required:** No

**Performed by:** Health Care workers

### **Equipment Required:**

Blood Pressure Cuff with plastic tubing (available from Central Service). If additional latex free articles are needed and are not available on the unit(s), there is a request form that can be completed to assist you obtaining the item(s).

### **Procedural Steps:**

1. Upon admission any patient suspected of having a latex allergy will be placed in a room in which latex products have been removed or covered; if they cannot be removed, avoid direct contact of latex products with the patients

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 20, 2003

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES • DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

**APPROVED BY:**

**Key Point:** Questions about itching, rash, or wheezing after using latex gloves or facial puffiness and watery eyes after inflating a toy balloon may be useful in determining latex allergy.

2. The Registered Nurse (RN) will document the latex allergy information in all appropriate documents in the patient's electronic health care record. (i.e. nursing assessment, medication administration record, flow sheets)
3. The RN will instruct the patient and family to notify each health care worker providing care of this latex allergy.
4. A safety alert indicating this allergy will be placed on the patient upon admission
5. The RN will request supplies from central service and place latex free items in the patient's room, at the bedside. A Latex Allergy sign shall be placed at the patient's bedside and at the entrance to the room indicating "Latex Allergy"
6. The RN will communicate among the nursing and interdisciplinary team members that the patient is allergic to Latex during team conference and intershift report. The availability of latex free supplies at the bedside shall be communicated during report.
7. When making appointments for diagnostic services, the RN or Unit Clerk will notify the department that the patient has a Latex Allergy.
8. Patients will be placed in a prepared latex free private exam area/room to provide a latex safe environment. For clinic visits or outpatient procedures, schedule the known latex sensitive patient as the first appointment of the day when airborne particles are the lowest whenever possible.
9. Prepare a latex safe environment.
  - A. Remove all Latex containing products (gloves, tourniquets, tape, etc.) from the room. If latex product cannot be removed, items should be located in a closed storage area, such as cabinets and drawers.
  - B. After removing latex items, thoroughly clean patient's room/exam area using latex free (Nitrile or vinyl) gloves to remove contaminated latex-containing dust. **Do not wear latex or rubber gloves to clean room.**
  - C. Bed mattress/exam tables do contain latex and should be covered completely with a sheet.
  - D. Restock room with the latex free products and latex free gloves.
  - E. Place latex allergy sign on patient's door/exam area.
  - F. Re-stock room with latex free supplies needed for latex allergic patients. Ensure latex free supplies are readily available as needed.

10. Health care workers who observe inpatients with allergic reactions such as skin rashes, hives, flushing, itching, nasal, eye or sinus symptoms; respiratory distress, and (rarely) shock, following the use of latex-containing products should report this reaction immediately to the patient's physician. Treat as clinically indicated for any allergic/anaphylactic reaction.

11. Health Care Worker Guidelines:

**NOTE: IF IN DOUBT THAT A PRODUCT IS LATEX FREE, DON'T USE IT.**

- A. Before applying a tourniquet, uses a latex free glove as a tourniquet.
- B. Use latex supplies, which can be obtained from central supply.
- C. Use the Tympanic thermometer or Tempa dots.
- D. Use medication in ampules, if possible. If you must use a vial with a rubber stopper, remove the stopper or use a 0/22 micron filter (available in Pharmacy) to draw up the medication.
- E. Use latex free gloves. Sterile latex free gloves and unsterile latex free exam gloves in various sizes are available in central supply.
- F. Catheters or Nasogastric (NG) tubes should be made of plastic or silastic.
- G. Use paper or vinyl tape instead of cloth tape.

**Patient / Family Education:**

- 1. Alert patient / family to the potential danger of latex allergy and the importance of notifying all health care workers, including the dentist prior to any procedures.
- 2. Encourage patients / families to read labels about toys and other purchased items to ensure that latex exposure is minimized.
- 3. Encourage families / friends to provide mylar instead of regular balloons.
- 4. Patients with latex allergies should be encouraged to wear "Medic Alert" bracelets.

**Documentation:**

- 1. See #1 under Procedural Steps - regarding medical record documentation.
- 2. Document on the flow sheet each shift the availability of the Latex Allergy supplies at bedside.
- 3. Document signs / symptoms of allergic reaction in the progress notes and nursing actions taken.

**AUTHORS:**

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**REFERENCES:**

American Latex Allergy Association: [www.Latexallergyresource.org](http://www.Latexallergyresource.org)

Center for disease control, n.d., 2016)

American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology, 2016

Potential for sensitization and possible allergic reaction to natural rubber Latex Gloves and other natural rubber products. , 2008)

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