

**OLIVE VIEW-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER
POLICY & PROCEDURE**

**NUMBER: 19
VERSION: 3**

SUBJECT/TITLE: LATEX ALLERGY/SENSITIVITY PRE-EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYEES

POLICY: Efforts will be made to provide an environment for employees that will reasonably reduce their exposure to products containing latex.

PURPOSE: Less than one percent of the general public experiences latex allergy. It is estimated that 8 to 17 percent of health workers may develop an allergy to latex. Evidence suggests that continued exposure to latex products may cause increased sensitivity. Reactions may progress from chronic dermatitis to asthma and/or anaphylaxis.

DEPARTMENTS: All

DEFINITIONS:

PROCEDURE: Only powder-free gloves will be purchased and used anywhere in Olive View – UCLA Medical Center (OVMC). Whenever feasible, products handled by employees will be free of latex.

Pre-employees and employees will be screened for known or suspected latex sensitivities.

Efforts will be made to provide a latex-safe environment for employees with an allergy to latex (see related policy entitled Latex Allergy/Sensitivity) and to provide an alternative high-quality glove for employees who have a contact dermatitis allergy.

I. Implementation

A. Identification of Latex Sensitivity in Pre-Employees:

1. Pre-employees will be screened for potential and known latex and/or glove allergy/sensitivity. If there is suspicion for possible latex allergy (i.e., multiple operations, allergy to tropical or pitted fruit, prior reaction to latex products, frequent contact with latex), the Natural Rubber Latex Questionnaire should be completed. Based on the response to the questionnaire, the pre-employee will be placed into one of three categories according to the Latex

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Allergy Evaluation Algorithm.

- a. The definitive diagnosis of latex allergy and required work restrictions will be obtained from a physician.
- b. The Employee Health Services (EHS) will identify contact dermatitis allergy symptoms associated to glove use and will suggest an alternative glove. If unable to identify an adequate glove solution, the pre-employee will need a physician's definitive diagnosis and written work restriction.

II. Pre-employees Found to Have Latex Allergy

- A. EHS will assign the pre-employee a medical classification of Category 1 with restrictions. The diagnosing physician will order written restriction. The director of the department hiring the pre-employee and Human Resources will discuss possible accommodations regarding the potential employment of the pre-employee and will determine if accommodation is appropriate or possible. (Subcontractors will evaluate if accommodations are appropriate or possible for their pre-employees through their hiring departments). Every effort will be made to provide reasonable accommodations according to the Americans with Disabilities Act and all applicable rules and regulations pertaining to new hire employees.

Items to be considered are:

1. What is the level or amount of latex exposure the pre-employee will encounter in the position they are seeking?
2. How safely could the pre-employee avoid latex exposure in the position they are seeking?
3. Can the position be reasonably modified or accommodated?
4. Is another position vacant and safe for which the pre-employee is qualified?

III. Pre-employee Found to Have Only Contact Dermatitis to Gloves or Other Similar Allergy

- A. In the pre-employee with an identified allergy, the EHS nurse will assign the pre-employee a medical classification of Category 1 with restrictions.

Example of restrictions: To avoid contact with _____

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(examples: latex gloves, powdered gloves, or identified chemical activators/irritants).

- B. Pre-employee with unidentified source of allergy or contact dermatitis to gloves:

If the offending source and alternative gloves have not been identified at the time of initial interview in EHS, the employee will be classified as Category 2, medically capable of performing this job, but further action may be required during probationary period. A physician's note indicating diagnosis and work restrictions will be required. Then the pre-employee will be assigned a medical classification of Category 1 with restrictions given by the physician. The director of the department hiring the candidate of employment and Human Resources will discuss possible accommodations as described in Section II.

IV. Education of Employee

Approved latex sensitivity educational materials will be provided to all employees.

V. Protocol for Employees with Latex Allergy Symptoms.

- A. If the individual or their supervisor believes he or she is developing symptoms of latex allergies/sensitivity, they should seek assistance through:
1. Employee Health Services for non-life threatening symptoms such as:
 - a. Rash or contact dermatitis
 - b. Sneezing, rhino-conjunctivitis, (runny-nose, itching eyes)
 - c. History of possible allergy symptoms listed below in #2 but not experiencing currently
 2. Emergency Department or initiate the Code Blue Team emergency response system if life-threatening symptoms are present:
 - a. Itching, swelling of eyelids, lips, face, or throat
 - b. Hives, wheezing, chest tightness, tachycardia (rapid heart action) shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing

VI. Identification of Latex Sensitivity in Employees:

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- A. Employees will be screened for potential and known latex and/or glove allergy/sensitivity. If there is a suspicion for possible latex allergy (i.e., multiple operations, allergy to tropical and pitted fruit, prior reaction to latex products, frequent contact with the latex), the “Natural Rubber Latex Questionnaire” should be completed. Based on the response to the questionnaire, the employee will be placed into one of three categories according to the Latex Allergy Evaluation Algorithm.
 - 1. The definitive diagnosis of latex allergy and restriction will be obtained from a physician.
 - 2. The EHS nurse will identify contact dermatitis and other similar allergy symptoms associated with glove use and will suggest an alternative glove.
 - 3. Symptoms thought to be caused by latex or glove exposure and in need of a physician’s evaluation will be considered work related, and the employee will submit Industrial Accident forms.

VII. Employees Found to have Latex Allergies or Contact Dermatitis to Gloves.

- A. The Director of the department in which the employee works and Human Resources will determine if accommodation is appropriate or possible according to the Americans With Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. See Section II (subcontractors will evaluate if accommodations are appropriate or possible for their pre-employees through their hiring departments.)
- B. The employees with latex allergies or contact dermatitis are encourages to:
 - 1. Protect him/herself by avoiding latex or identified irritant.
 - 2. Keep informed about development in latex allergies and treatment.
 - 3. Be alert and to check labels for latex content or the identified irritant in products/equipment.
 - 4. Wear a medical alert bracelet for latex allergies and to carry an Epi-pen for ready access when recommended by physician.
 - 5. Notify their supervisor and EHS of new or additional latex allergy symptoms as they develop and to seek emergency medical care if a life-threatening reaction occurs.

VIII. Reporting Trends in Latex Sensitivity

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Employee Health Services will maintain statistics to track the number of pre-employees and employees with latex allergies and contact dermatitis. Human Resources will track the number of Industrial Accidents filed related to latex allergies and their outcomes.

References:	
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