

VALLEYCARE
OLIVE VIEW-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER/HEALTH CENTERS
POLICY & PROCEDURE

NUMBER: 237
VERSION: 1

SUBJECT/TITLE: LATEX ALLERGY/SENSITIVITY

POLICY: The goal of the ValleyCare Latex Allergy/Sensitivity Patient Care Protocol is to reduce unnecessary latex exposure. This protocol is intended to describe procedures to provide a latex-safe environment to patients that have a known latex allergy, as well as to patients with a high risk or suspicion of latex allergy.

PURPOSE: Many of the supplies and equipment used in health care contain latex. Certain groups are more susceptible to developing latex allergies. Patients with known latex allergy and patients at a high risk for developing latex allergy must be cared for in a latex-safe environment. A latex-safe environment will be provided to prevent or reduce the risk of severe, life-threatening complications. It is important to identify the patients at risk so they received the appropriate care. The purpose of this protocol is to 1) identify the patient population at risk, 2) describe the patient care protocol, and 3) minimize exposure to latex products to prevent the development of latex allergy and allergic reactions.

DEPARTMENTS: All

DEFINITIONS: **Latex Allergy:** These patients exhibit signs and symptoms of allergy when exposed to latex products.

- A. Documentation exists that diagnostic tests have been positive for latex allergy.
- B. History of anaphylaxis upon exposure to latex products, or anaphylactic reactions of unknown etiology during surgery or medical procedures.
- C. Exhibits allergy symptoms when exposed to latex products, including but not limited to sneezing, runny nose, itchy or watery eyes, urticaria, angioedema or bronchospasm.

Latex Alert: These patient have not been diagnosed with a latex allergy and are asymptomatic but are at a higher risk and warrant close observation for the development of a latex allergy symptom.

- A. History of working extensively with latex rubber products (health-care workers, rubber plant/product manufacturing workers, workers handling contaminated products/caustic chemicals for which latex gloves are used to protect the worker's skin).

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- B. History of multiple allergies.
- C. History of multiple procedures (myelomenigocele and myelodysplasia, spina bifida, congenital urologic defects).
- D. Onset of first operation before one year of age
- E. Frequent urinary catheterization/barium enemas.
- F. Health care workers with symptoms of Contact Dermatitis to gloves.

PROCEDURE: **I. Scope and Responsibility**

- A. **Medical Staff:** Responsible for diagnosis of allergy type, and documentation of allergy in the medical record. A referral to an allergist will be ordered if the treating physician feels that it is medically indicated. A physician can, at anytime, order a latex-safe environment if the patient's condition indicates.
- B. **Nursing Staff:** Responsible for assessment and documentation of patient allergies, notification of other health care professionals, and for providing a latex-safe environment.
- C. **Materials Management:** Responsible for identifying and providing latex-safe products and supplies.
- D. **Pharmacy:** Responsible for providing latex-safe injections and intravenous solutions.
- E. **Nutrition Services:** Responsible for providing nutritional needs while avoiding foods with cross reactivity to latex. Examples include: avocados, bananas, chestnuts, kiwis, or pitted fruit. All food products must be prepared, handled, and served with non-latex gloves and containers/equipment.
- F. **Pathology/Laboratory:** Responsible for providing latex-safe procedures. Blood products are to be prepared as latex-safe as possible.
- G. **Radiology/Respiratory Therapy/Physical and Occupational Therapy/All areas of patient care and diagnostic procedures:** Responsible for providing latex-safe environment and products.
- H. **All Departments:** Responsible to provide education and information pertinent to their specific area to their staff.

II. Equipment/Supplies

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ValleyCare will provide latex-safe environment for all patients requiring latex precautions. A latex-safe pack will be obtained from central services for hospital inpatients, which will contain the needed supplies and signs for the patient care areas.

III. Levels of Care

The following will be provided to all patients, visitors, and staff of ValleyCare:

- A. All exam and sterile gloves used throughout ValleyCare will be powder-free to decrease the risk of airborne latex particles.
- B. Toy latex balloons will be discouraged within the Medical Center. Mylar balloons will be encouraged.
- C. Workers in situation that do not require the use of sterile gloves will wear vinyl, copolymer, or non-latex gloves only.
- D. Initial allergy screening for the patient will take place at the point of entry for care. If there is a suspicion for possible latex allergy (i.e. spina bifida patient, allergy to tropical and 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 patient will be placed into one of three categories according to the Latex Allergy Evaluation Algorithm. Identified allergies will be recorded on patient records, and in available HIS records.

IV. Latex Allergy

The following steps will be taken for patients with latex allergy while the Hospital or while having any procedure. Items marked with an asterisk(*) should suffice for outpatient clinics.

- A. *Patient’s environment will be as latex-safe as possible. The patient will be provided a single room when available and all latex products removed. The room is to be prepared and cleaned using synthetic/vinyl gloves. If surgery/medical/radiological, etc. procedures are required, they should be the first case of the day if possible. The hospital room is to be prepared the day before, whenever possible by removal of all latex products.
- B. *All people will wash their hands before entering the patient’s room to remove latex residue from hands.

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- C. *The physician will have readily available epinephrine, hydrocortisone, and diphenhydramine. These are supplies in the drug box on the emergency carts.
- D. *All products, supplies, and equipment used in and around the patient will be latex-safe. A listing of supplies distributed from the warehouse/central services containing latex will be provided to clinicians in the latex-safe pack.
- E. *A Latex allergy label will be placed on the chart. A “Latex Precaution” sign will be posted on the door of room and the head of the bed. A green latex allergy identification band will be placed on the patient’s wrist. The signs, labels, and armbands will be available in the latex-safe pack from central services.
- F. *Medication (including chemotherapy), TPN, and blood products will be prepared as much as possible in a latex-safe environment.
 - 1. Use glass ampoules when available for IV medication preparation.
 - 2. Remove rubber stoppers from vials. Do not puncture rubber stoppers if possible.
 - 3. Do not use latex injection ports on IV bags. If the IV tubing has in-line ports that are latex the health care worker will cover all ports with non-latex tape to remind personnel not to use.
 - 4. Prepare IV syringe products less than 24 hours before the scheduled dose is to be given.
 - 5. Minimize coring of rubber stoppers or injection ports for total parenteral nutritional and chemotherapy preparation.
 - 6. Use non-latex or synthetic gloves and latex-free syringes for preparation of patient medications and IV fluids.
 - 7. Wipe IV preparation hood with 70% isopropyl alcohol before preparing IV products for any patients with latex allergy.
- G. Food preparation
 - 1. Physician to order a latex-safe diet. Dietary will check for allergies and dietary restrictions.
 - 2. No latex-containing products on food tray (rubber bands, balloons, etc.).
 - 3. Foods with cross reactivity to latex will not be placed on the tray.
 - 4. Food services staff at all times during food preparation and delivery will use latex-free gloves.

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- H. *Patients care equipment preparation and sterilization will be handled in a latex-safe manner (areas such as central services, O.R., ED, and endoscopy).
 - 1. Tray cleaning and reassembling must be completed using synthetic gloves.
 - 2. Avoid tapes that have latex as part of their adhesive.
 - 3. Always use new wrapping materials.
 - 4. Latex-free equipment should be autoclaved separately from latex-containing materials.
 - 5. Use a new batch of high level disinfectant (Cidex OPA) solution or, if not possible, rinse the instruments extensively. Items sterilized in ethylene oxide (EO or ETO) must be rinsed before use. Residual ETO can react and cause an allergic response in the latex-allergic patient.
 - 6. Special labels for “latex-safe sterilization” will be placed on the equipment package wrapping.

- I. Poinsettia plants will not be allowed in the patient’s immediate environment.

- J. *All staff members responsible for the care of the patient will monitor for signs/symptoms of latex allergy. Any signs of allergic reaction will result in the immediate notification of physician.

- K. *If the patient is to have a procedure or examination outside of the area, the nurse must inform the new location of the patient’s allergy prior to arrival so appropriate preparations can be made. The physician will indicate the need for special latex-safe preparation on the request form for the procedures/exam.

- L. *The physician and nursing staff will be responsible for providing education regarding latex allergy to the patient/family, such as a list of products that commonly contain latex, signs/symptoms of allergic reaction, and actions to take in case of an allergic reaction, informing everyone the patient comes in contact with of his/her latex allergy (especially the primary care physician and any patient care personnel), the importance of purchasing a Medic Alert bracelet indicating “Latex Allergy” and an epi-pen.

V. Latex Alert

The following will be provided to patients:

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- A. All staff members responsible for care of the patient will monitor for signs/symptoms of latex allergy and will notify the appropriate medical staff for assessment.
- B. The physician and nurse will be responsible for providing education regarding latex allergy to the patient/family. The information given will contain a list of products that commonly contain latex, signs/symptoms of allergic reaction, and actions to take in case of allergic reaction.
- C. If evidence of latex allergy occurs, the physician will order latex allergy precautions and latex-safe environment.

References:	
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