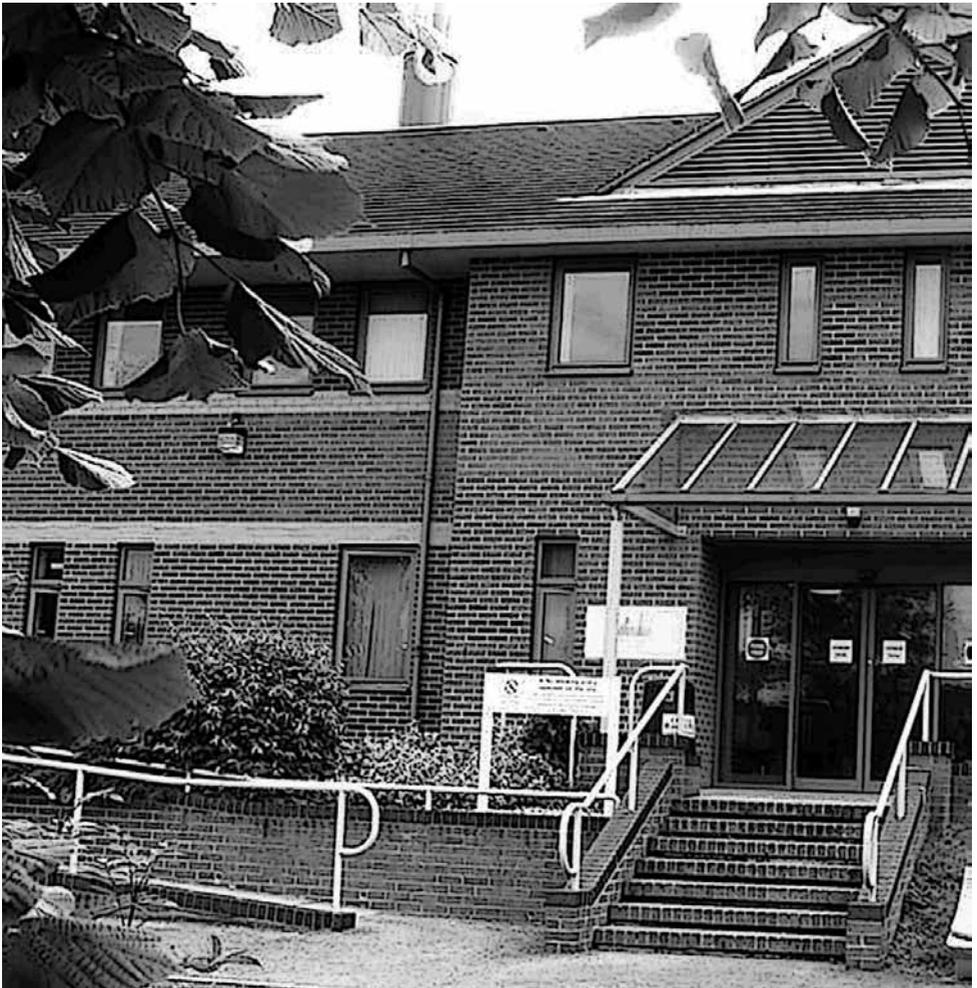


Department of Dermatology

# Natural rubber latex allergy

Information for patients



**You are allergic to natural rubber latex.** If you touch this it may cause itching, swelling and wheals (raised, red areas on the skin) at the site of contact. It may also cause sneezing, wheezing, breathlessness, swelling of the lips and tongue and watering of the eyes. Rarely it may cause anaphylaxis (breathing difficulty / collapse).

You must avoid all articles made from rubber including gloves (household and surgical), balloons, condoms and diaphragm contraceptives. A more comprehensive, although not exhaustive, list of sources of rubber is given on page 7.

Remember that allergy to natural rubber latex is potentially serious and you must take every possible precaution to avoid contact with it.

## Other precautions

1. A **medical alert bracelet** stating “allergic to natural rubber latex”. This will alert others to your allergy. See the following websites for how to obtain a medical alert bracelet: [www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk), 020 7833 3034 or [www.IdentifyYourself.com](http://www.IdentifyYourself.com) 0800 055 6504.
2. **If you have severe symptoms such as wheezing you should always carry with you adrenaline for self-injection.** This is an emergency treatment that you can give yourself if you have a major reaction. We will show you how to use this and you should be confident what to do in an emergency. (Please see anaphylaxis information sheet supplied by the Dermatology Department.) For severe symptoms you will need to dial 999 for an ambulance.
3. It is important that you inform anyone who normally wears rubber gloves to attend to your personal needs. **People who should be informed include doctors, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, radiographers and chiropodists. You should also inform your hairdresser and beautician.**

It is particularly important if you undergo an internal examination such as a dental examination or a smear check or a surgical operation. These carers must not wear natural rubber latex gloves. Vinyl, neoprene and nitrile synthetic rubber gloves are safe, but hypoallergenic latex gloves are not.

4. Inform your **employer, school or college** to ensure that you are in a latex safe environment.
5. If you wish to use **barrier contraception** there are non-latex (polyurethane) condoms and diaphragm contraceptives available such as Avanti and Femidom.

6. Remember that your present degree of allergy may be insufficient to cause a serious reaction. **It is wise to avoid all rubber since the degree of allergy and thus your reaction can change with each contact. You should assume that your allergy is life-long.**

## Other possible sources of natural rubber latex

- **Natural rubber latex is present in the stoppers and bungs in certain injection vials such as local anaesthetics.**

It is important that you mention this to your doctor/dentist or nurse. 'Antigen Europe' produces local anaesthetic in glass vials, which would be suitable.

- Most people who are allergic to natural rubber latex have no problems with **footwear**. If you need to wear Wellington boots avoid rubber ones and use plastic boots instead. You may need to avoid wearing trainers for prolonged periods. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyurethane (PU), and ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) are safe materials.
- Some patients with an allergy to natural rubber latex are also allergic to some fruits and vegetables including avocado, banana, chestnut, kiwi, papaya, mango, melon, fig, tomato, passion fruit, pineapple, potato, green beans. Reactions may also be caused by any food which has been handled by people wearing latex gloves e.g. in restaurants and packing facilities.
- Inform your local garage about your allergy when your car is serviced.

## Further information

Please find out as much as you can about your allergy. The following support groups/ websites may be useful:

- The Latex Allergy Support Group (PO Box 27, Filey, YO14 9YH) is a national support group for those affected by latex allergy. It produces a number of leaflets on latex allergy.  
[www.lasg.co.uk](http://www.lasg.co.uk)
- The British Association of Dermatologists' Patient Information Gateway leaflet provides very detailed information.  
[www.bad.org.uk/public/leaflets/bad\\_patient\\_information\\_gateway\\_leaflets/latex/](http://www.bad.org.uk/public/leaflets/bad_patient_information_gateway_leaflets/latex/)
- The anaphylaxis campaign (PO Box 275 Farnborough, Hampshire GU146SX): [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)
- The UK Health and Safety Executive have a web site which is particularly good if you work in the health service or are an employer: [www.hse.gov.uk/latex/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/latex/)

If you have any further questions or concerns about this problem you should contact the Dermatology Department by letter or by telephone:

### **Dermatology Department**

The Churchill Hospital  
Old Road  
Oxford OX3 7LJ

Tel: **01865 228266** or **228224** or **228253**

## Examples of articles containing latex

- Gloves and glove powder
- Balloons and balloon powder
- Rubber contraceptives
- Adhesive plaster and glues
- Some stretch textiles
- Rubber shoes and boots
- Swimming hats
- Hot water bottles
- Baby soothers
- Some shower curtains
- Door/window insulation
- Diving and anaesthetic masks
- Suspenders
- Latex mattresses and pillows
- Steering wheel covers
- Rubber bands
- Pencil rubbers
- Urinary catheters
- Injection vials
- 'Drip' giving sets
- Components of wheelchairs
- Tyres

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

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