Avoiding Allergic Reactions to Latex Stats and Facts

FACTS

Latex allergy often begins with a rash on the hands following use of rubber gloves, but can also manifest itself through respiratory distress, eczema or oedema. Other signs include hay fever, itchy and swollen eyes, a runny nose and sneezing following latex exposure. Some patients can develop asthma symptoms such as chest tightness, wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath.

Certain people are at greater risk of developing a latex allergy:

1. People with spina bifida. The risk of latex allergy is highest in people with spina bifida – a birth defect that affects the development of the spine. People with this disorder often are exposed to latex products through early and frequent health care. People with spina bifida should always avoid latex products.
2. People who undergo multiple surgeries or medical procedures. Repeated exposure to latex gloves and medical products increases your risk of developing latex allergy.
3. Health care workers. If you work in health care, you’re at increased risk of developing a latex allergy.
4. Rubber industry workers. Repeated exposure to latex may increase sensitivity.
5. People with a personal or family history of allergies. You’re at increased risk of latex allergy if you have other allergies – such as hay fever or a food allergy – or they’re common in your family.

STATS

- The prevalence of latex allergy varies from less than 1% in the general population to as high as 12% among health care

staff who routinely wear latex gloves; most of those with positive allergy test results have only mild symptoms on exposure. Anaphylactic reactions to latex affect only a small fraction of those with latex allergy, but there is no way of accurately forecasting which of those with latex allergy may be affected.

- Prevalence of latex allergy is estimated at 1-6% of the general public and 6-12% of regularly exposed health care workers.
- 10-17 % of healthcare workers and 33.8 % of dental care workers have been diagnosed with latex allergy. In addition, 17 % of restaurant workers have been diagnosed with latex allergy.
- There are more than 40,000 products worldwide that contain latex and it’s often very difficult for people with latex allergy to perform everyday tasks and live a full, active life.