

Student Handout

Latex Allergies

Hairdressers who use disposable gloves may develop a reaction to either real latex gloves or synthetic ones. The most common reaction is **sensitivity** to either latex or synthetic gloves, causing contact dermatitis—dry, raw skin, usually after 5-6 days of exposure. People who are **allergic** to real latex can have severe reactions called anaphylaxis. The reaction can occur just minutes after exposure to latex and can include swelling of the eyelids and face, runny nose, coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, fast heart rate, and low blood pressure.

Safety Alert

If you have been advised that you might be allergic to latex or other rubber products, you should:

- Never wear latex gloves.
- Wear a Medic Alert bracelet.
- Carry an allergy kit such as Epipen® or Ana-Kit®.

Safety tips

- Eliminate the use of natural latex gloves where possible.
- If you use natural latex gloves:
 - Remove them carefully to prevent releasing the powder in them, which contains latex protein, into the air.
 - Minimize the amount of time you have them on.
 - Wash your hands immediately after removing them to remove the powder.
 - Avoid the use of other natural rubber products.
- Encourage your employer to purchase synthetic latex gloves, preferably without powder.
- Minimize the use of hand lotions and rinse well after washing your hands to remove soap residues, which tend to become irritants inside latex gloves.
- If you develop a rash on your hands that you suspect is caused by use of latex gloves, report it to your supervisor, and see your doctor.

