

CORPORATE PROCEDURE

LATEX ALLERGY

1 Aims of the procedure.

The aims of this Corporate Procedure is ensure that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) complies with its legal obligations under relevant legislation, and to ensure the hazards associated with latex is kept to the lowest level reasonably practical.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Corporate Directors

Corporate Directors shall be responsible for the overall implementation of this Corporate Procedure.

2.2 Heads of Service

Heads of Service shall be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this Corporate Procedure and will ensure the provision of the necessary resources to ensure a safe system of work, comply with the requirements of the policy and the regulations.

2.3 Governing Bodies of Schools Maintained by Education Authority

There is a shared overall responsibility for health, safety and welfare between the LEA, governing body and headteacher.

2.4 Managers/ Team Leaders/Headteachers

Managers/ Team Leaders/Headteachers are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Corporate Procedure within their workplaces to comply with management guidance.

3 Persons at risk

Particular groups of people who experience frequent, intimate or prolonged contact with latex products, have other allergies or specific medical conditions, are more likely to exhibit hypersensitivity:

- health care workers, particularly multiple glove wearers, those who wear gloves for extended periods or employees with a history of frequent exposure;
- individuals with a history of multiple invasive surgery, especially before 12 years of age;
- atopic individuals, particularly those with plant or food allergies (avocado, banana, kiwi fruit, chestnut and other nuts or fruit) demonstrate an increased likelihood of sensitisation to rubber latex;

Please note : Clients and /or Service Users may also be allergic or sensitive to Latex products.

4 Principles in managing latex allergies.

There are several main principles of latex management they are:

4.1 Purchase

- identifying all latex products before they are purchased there may be an alternative;
- if a latex product is purchased make sure that users are aware that the product contains latex.
- do not purchase powdered gloves and remove all powdered gloves from the premises;
- ensure latex gloves fall under 50 µg/g.

4.2 Equipment

- ensure staff are aware that the product is latex or has latex parts;

4.3 Surveillance and Employment

- pre-employment questionnaires to identify allergies prior to employment;
- informing the Manager/Team Leader so that they can ensure the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment is provided for the employee;
- if a member of staff becomes sensitive carry out health surveillance and a risk assessment of the environment and equipment they are working with;
- refer them to the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) to ensure appropriate guidance.

4.4 Risk assessment.

Managers/Team Leaders/Headteachers are required identify hazards through risk assessments and to ensure that risks are either eliminated or adequately controlled to the lowest level reasonably practicable. For guidance on risk assessments view the Corporate Procedure [CP/05/01](#)

5 Employee information on latex

5.1 Where is it used?

Latex products are use throughout the domestic and working environment. Latex is widely used to make gloves for the home and work. As well as being used for gloves latex is found in a variety products, balloons, condoms, dressings and bandages.

5.2 Who is or can be affected?

5.2.1 Anyone can become sensitised, but people who already have or had allergies to other products can be more susceptible to latex. If you have had Eczema as a child or suffer from Asthma or hay fever you could be more likely to develop an allergy to latex.

5.2.2 People can also become more sensitive after undergoing many operations.

5.2.3 Particular groups of people who experience frequent, intimate or prolonged contact with latex products.

5.2.4 Some individuals are allergic to the proteins found in the latex and others are sensitive to the chemical used in the manufacturing process.

5.3 How does it affect you?

There are *three types* of reaction.

5.3.1 The *most common problem* is a minor irritation of the skin where it has come in contact with latex. With gloves this could be the hand or wrist with the area becoming red, swollen, and irritated. This is not an allergic reaction and once the contact item is removed e.g. the glove, the symptoms will disappear and should not re-occur. However you should refrain from using the same type of product and change to a product that does not contain latex. **Do not use powdered latex gloves.**

Contact the OHU to arrange for a latex test to ensure that you are not developing an allergy to latex.

5.3.2 The *second type* of reaction can include:

- Localized or general rash (urticaria or hives);
- Inflammation of the mucous membranes in the nose (rhinitis);
- Red swollen eyes which discharge (conjunctivitis); and
- Asthma like symptoms.

This is an allergic response to latex protein and occurs almost immediately on contact. In rare cases it may result in a very severe reaction known as anaphylactic shock.

5.3.3 The *third type* of reaction includes dermatitis and itching with red blisters, this is usually localized to the hands or arms. These occur between 10-24 hrs after exposure and can get worse. This is an allergic response to the chemical additives.

5.4 Alternatives to Latex

There are alternatives to using latex and these are described in the Personal Protective Equipment Procedure ([CP/25/01](#)).

5.5 Further Information and Advice

The Latex Allergy Support Group, PO Box 27, Filey YO14 9YH.