

HSE issue warning over risk of latex allergies

With the increase of personal protective equipment (PPE) use, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has warned of the potential for workers to develop allergic reactions to items containing Latex.

Derived from tropical plants, latex is a milky sap collected on an industrial scale and used to make various rubber items including both household and medical gloves. In addition to the latex, many gloves may also contain residual chemicals added during manufacture.

Whilst most latex allergies are relatively minor and manifest as localised rashes or dermatitis, other symptoms may include asthma and occasionally anaphylaxis. Estimates suggest around 1 – 6% of the general population is thought to be sensitised to the proteins within natural rubber latex, to which some individuals may develop an allergy. The speed of reaction varies from a few minutes to an hour and depends on how allergic the person is and the degree of contact.

Doctors and occupational health professionals can undertake testing of staff and are able to diagnose cases easily. Management of an allergy to latex is more common than a permanent cure, and a variety of options are available. Milder reactions may be managed by avoiding contact with latex and carrying an allergy card, whereas severe reactions may require an adrenalin pen.

Further reading:

[Health and Safety Executive guidance](#)
[British Association of Dermatologists](#)



Owen Baker

Technical Officer - Policy and Research

Tel: (+44) 024 7518 5610

Email: owen.baker@bali.org.uk