

Let's Talk About...

Latex allergy

What is latex?

Latex is a material made from the milky sap of rubber trees. It is used to make rubber and can be found in toys, clothing, tires, rubber bands, rubber gloves, and some plants (poinsettias, ficus trees, and spurge).

Why should I worry about a latex allergy?

Latex contains proteins that cause allergies in some people. It can be found in a lot of medical equipment, including disposable gloves, elastic bandages, blood pressure cuffs, catheters, and tourniquets (bands to stop or slow blood flow). Children who have lots of surgeries or medical care can develop latex allergies.

What are the signs of a latex allergy?

Signs of a latex allergy include:

- Red skin or bumps after touching rubber
- Itchy or swollen lips after a dental visit
- Runny or itchy eyes after touching rubber
- Pain or a tight feeling in the chest after touching rubber
- Trouble breathing after touching rubber

If you notice any of these signs, call your child's healthcare provider right away.

Who is at risk for a latex allergy?

While anyone can develop a latex allergy, your child may be more likely to be allergic to latex if they:

- Have had multiple surgeries since birth
- Have spina bifida
- Were born with genital or urinary system birth defects
- Are allergic to bananas, kiwis, tomatoes, peaches, or cherries

If your child has any of these risk factors, they should avoid items with rubber, even if they've never had any latex allergy signs. Staying away from rubber will help keep your child from becoming allergic to latex.



What if my child is already allergic to latex?

There is no cure for a latex allergy. To protect your child, keep them away from all latex by doing the following:

- Tell all healthcare providers about your child's latex allergy, and make sure it's in their medical chart.
- Ask healthcare providers to use non-latex products, like vinyl or plastic gloves, plastic catheters, and silk tape.
- Don't use or let healthcare providers use latex urinary catheters, red rubber catheters for irrigations, or latex enema tubes.
- Be careful using therapy equipment, especially balance balls. They should be labeled if they contain latex.

