

Tip Sheets

Allergies: Latex

An allergy is the immune system's excessive reaction to a normally harmless substance, called an allergen. A latex allergen reaction can occur when latex proteins:

- Come in contact with the skin.
- Come in contact with a mucous membrane such as the mouth.
- Get into the lungs by breathing them in.

Allergic reactions to latex can be severe and life threatening.

Children who have had multiple surgeries with exposure to latex are at a higher risk for developing an allergy to latex. However, there has been a decline of latex allergies as more non-latex products are being used now than they were in the 1980's and 1990's.

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can result in death due to airway obstruction or a severe drop in blood pressure. It is an extreme total body reaction.

Treatment of Anaphylaxis

Epinephrine is the drug used to treat anaphylaxis by constricting muscles around blood vessels which elevates blood pressure, relaxing airway muscles, reducing swelling, and reducing the release of chemicals that cause anaphylaxis and stimulating the heart.

If ANY combination of signs is present and there is reason to suspect anaphylaxis, administer

epinephrine immediately and activate 911/EMS.

There is clear evidence that a delay in injecting epinephrine increases the odds of the person dying from anaphylaxis.

Risk Reduction

Avoiding contact with latex is the only way to prevent an anaphylactic reaction. It can be difficult to achieve complete avoidance, however, reducing the child's exposure to the allergen is possible.

1. Only non-latex gloves should be used by caregivers, staff and children.
2. Avoid balloons. When balloons break, the latex particles are released into the air.
3. Avoid soft rubber balls and stretchy rubber items, such as pink erasers and rubber bands.

Latex Cross-Reactive Foods

Some foods have proteins that are like those in the rubber tree sap. Sometimes children with latex allergies may experience a reaction to "latex reactive foods" such as nuts and fruit, particularly:

- Avocados
- Bananas
- Chestnuts
- Kiwi
- Apples
- Carrots
- Celery
- Papaya
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Melons



Individual Health Care Plan

It is critical caregivers receive from the child's licensed health care provider a copy of the "Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan" before providing care. This plan will provide specific directives to providing a safe environment and directives on how to recognize and treat a life-threatening reaction.

Additional Resources

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America:

<http://www.aafa.org/latex-allergy>

FARE | Non-Food Allergens

<https://www.foodallergy.org/resources/non-food-allergens>

FARE Free Course | Save a Life: Recognizing and Responding to Anaphylaxis

<https://www.foodallergy.org/recognizing-responding-anaphylaxis>

For more information, visit www.inclusivechildcare.org.

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