

## Safe Work Procedure (SWP)

<b>Name of Task: Latex (Natural Rubber Latex) Exposure</b>	
<b>Position/Job:</b> <i>All staff</i>	
<b>Equipment and/or Tools required:</b> <i>Not applicable</i>	<b>Personal Protective Equipment Required:</b> <i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Potential Hazards:</b> Natural rubber latex (more commonly referred to as "latex") is a sensitizer found in some surgical or exam gloves, blood pressure cuffs, catheters, oxygen masks, tubing, elastic wrap, etc. Latex can cause an allergic response in humans after initial exposure, leading to development of allergic symptoms if re-exposed at a later time. Allergic symptoms may include: hives, redness, irritation or skin rash in the area of latex contact, or watery itchy eyes, swelling of mouth/eyelids/lips/face, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, runny nose or sneezing. In persons with allergy to airborne latex, a life-threatening immediate allergic reaction ( <i>anaphylaxis</i> ) can occur.	
<b>Training and Proficiency:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Routine Practices <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LMS training	
<b>Steps to be taken to complete task safely:</b>	
<i>Definitions:</i> <i>Work related injury/illness reporting process: the method in which all work related injuries, illnesses and near misses are reported. Examples include WRHA Injury/Near Miss, Incident Tracker, etc.</i>	
<i>Occupational Safety and Health: examples include WRHA Occupational and Environmental Safety &amp; Health (OESH), Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), Safety and Health Coordinator, Occupational Health Nurse, etc.</i>	
1	Be familiar with and watch for supplies and equipment that contain natural rubber latex.
2	When gloves are necessary, use non-latex gloves such as polyethylene, nitrile, or vinyl. If someone in your work area is allergic to latex, <b>always</b> use non-latex gloves. If you have allergic contact dermatitis, avoid contact with latex supplies especially latex gloves.
3	In the rare case that you must use latex gloves: a) Where available, use only hand creams or lotions provided by the employer. Oil-based hand creams or lotions react with latex, increasing your risk of developing an allergic reaction. b) Inform your supervisor, Occupational Safety and Health and follow your facility/site/program work related injury/illness reporting process if you have skin problems while wearing latex gloves. Follow up with your healthcare provider.
4	If you experience an immediate, serious allergic reaction at work: a) Call for help. b) Give yourself treatment for the reaction if you have been trained to do so. c) Get first aid/medical attention if needed. d) Follow your facility/site/program work related injury/illness reporting process. e) Follow up with your healthcare provider.
5	If you are latex-allergic: a) Inform your supervisor, Occupational Safety and Health, and coworkers. b) Avoid all latex-containing items. c) If powdered latex gloves are in use by others, avoid areas where you might inhale the powder. d) Help to identify supplies and equipment that contain natural rubber latex. e) Change your protective clothing after any exposure to latex. f) Carry supplies for treatment of serious allergic reactions. Wearing a medical alert bracelet or similar is recommended.

## Responsibilities

### **Managers/Supervisors:**

- 1) Make education available about:
  - a) The risks of exposure to natural rubber latex; and
  - b) Safe work procedures; and
  - c) Availability of health checks; and
  - d) Symptoms and self-report of reactions; and
  - e) Actions to take if a staff member is affected by latex (contact supervisor and Occupational Safety and Health)
- 2) Work with a latex-allergic staff member and Occupational Safety and Health to:
  - a) Perform a workplace risk assessment; and
  - b) Figure out the impact on the staff member's work based on the staff member's type of latex allergy. If latex cannot be excluded from the staff member's work area, identify work that carries a lower risk of exposure; and
  - c) Recommend measures to provide a safe work environment; and
  - d) Help the latex-allergic staff member to identify, manage and report latex reactions; and
  - e) Help the latex-allergic staff member's coworkers understand specific measures to use to prevent and manage reactions; and
  - f) Make the staff member aware that s/he must carry supplies for treatment of serious allergic reactions; and
  - g) Recommend that the staff member wears a medical alert bracelet or similar.
  - h) Encourage affected staff member(s) to see a healthcare provider for assessment, treatment and support.

### **Staff:**

- 1) Understand the Latex Safe Environment for Staff Policy and this Safe Work Procedure.
- 2) Follow procedures to reduce the risk of reactions in people that have latex allergy.
- 3) Follow procedures to reduce their own risk of developing latex allergy.

**Note:** this task will be monitored periodically to ensure compliance and safety

### **Completion and Review**

This safe work procedure will be reviewed any time the task, equipment or materials change and at a minimum of every three years from the last revision date

<b>Created/Completed Date:</b> 2016.04.20	<b>Created/Completed By:</b> Latex Policy Working Group/Mulvihill/Woloschuk	<b>References:</b> <i>WRHA Latex Safe Environment for Staff Policy 20.20.050</i>
<b>Last Revision Date:</b> 2016.04.20	<b>Last Revision By:</b>	