

HSE POLICY ON THE PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT OF LATEX ALLERGY 2017

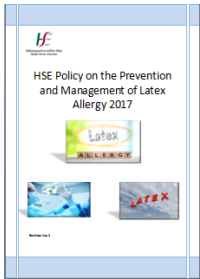
FAST FACT, REF FF:012:01

FAST FACTS provide a brief overview of various health and safety topics to support our managers, employees, safety representatives and others. Additional information, if required, is available by visiting our website at: www.hse.ie/safetyandwellbeing or by contacting the National Health and Safety Function Helpdesk. Why not bring this to your Safety

This Fact Fact provides a brief overview of the **HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Latex Allergy 2017**

The policy can be downloaded [here](#).

DID YOU KNOW THAT exposure to Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) may lead to the development of an allergy, which is associated with a range of reactions to the substance including skin rashes (allergic contact dermatitis), local or generalised urticaria (“hives”), “hay fever” like symptoms (e.g. rhinitis & conjunctivitis) and asthma. In rare cases contact may lead to potentially fatal anaphylaxis. Contact with NRL may be either direct (skin contact) or indirect (exposure to airborne particles).



POLICY STATEMENT It is the Policy of the HSE to reduce, to the lowest level reasonably practicable, the exposure of employees and patients to Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) and provide articles that are safe and without risk to health

PURPOSE The purpose of this policy is to set out the HSE’s chosen approach to managing the risks to patients, employees and others who may be exposed to NRL in the course of the HSE’s activities.

SCOPE This policy applies to manager(s) (Responsible Person) and employees who are:

- Responsible for, or work in an area where products containing NRL may be used or handled by employees and/or come in contact with patients.
- Involved in the setting of clinical/procurement (etc) policy where the policy may have an impact on the use of products containing NRL

Key Health and Safety Legislation

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations 2001
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007



Manager, Surgeon, Anaesthetist, Pharmacy Manager Key Roles and Responsibilities

- Ensure that risk assessments for their area of responsibility cover the potential for exposure to NRL and implement any control measures to include those outlined in Appendix 2 and 4 of the policy.
- Ensure that specific risk assessments are completed for patients and employees who are identified as being allergic to NRL and implement any control measures to include those outlined in Appendix 2, 3 and 4 of the policy
- Ensure that specific risk assessments are completed for patients and employees who are identified as being allergic to NRL and implement any control measures to include those outlined in Appendix 2, 3 and 4

Employee Key Roles and Responsibilities

- Take reasonable care to protect their safety, health and welfare and that of others
- Adhere to and apply this Policy, local procedures and safe systems of work and any associated risk assessments and risk controls
- Attending relevant training as appropriate
- Report adverse incidents associated with the exposure of NRL in accordance with the HSE Safety Incident Management Policy, 2014

Detailed roles and responsibilities are outlined in the **HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Latex Allergy, 2017**

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In order to minimise the risk from NRL, risk assessments must be undertaken to ensure that the exposure of employees and patients to NRL is avoided where reasonably practicable, and adequately controlled in all other circumstances. This section summarises the general risk control programme for NRL allergy and is supported by a number of appendices which give detailed procedures and guidelines.

- **Identify the Hazard:** e.g. Use of latex gloves or latex containing products
- **Identify the Risk:** Where the hazard cannot be avoided:
 - Identify particular latex allergy risk groups (see appendices 5 & 6 of Policy)
 - Identify patients with latex allergy (refer to Appendix 1 of Policy)
 - Allergies in new employees are identified through pre-employment checks
 - Existing Employees are educated to recognise symptoms and to self-report
- **Identification of Control Measures:** Control measures include the following:
 - Use NRL free products where reasonably practicable
 - Implement guidelines on latex use (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4 of Policy)
 - Provision of latex safe facilities
 - Availability of an appropriate evidence-based health surveillance programme administered by the Occupational Health Dept
 - Provision of appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision
 - Communication with other care givers
- **Assess and rate the risk**

SUPPORTS

Support can be sought from **Procurement** (see Section 6.9 of the Policy) and **Occupational Health** (see section 6.10 of the Policy)

FURTHER GUIDANCE

The following additional guidance is provided in the Appendices to the Policy:

- Types of reactions to gloves, symptoms, potential causes and treatment
- Guideline on Glove Selection
- Specific Procedures, Patients and Clients Identified/suspected latex allergy
- Specific Procedures, Employees (Prevention and Management of Latex Sensitisation)
- Identification of Risk Groups
- Sample Patient Latex Allergy Screening Tool
- Products containing Latex (NIOSH Publication Pg 97-135)
- Implementation Plan
- Audit Checklist

A STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A step-by-step procedure to implement the *HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Latex Allergy* is given in Appendix VIII of the Policy

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION (For Full List please refer to Section 10 and 11 of this Policy)



- <http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/?s=latex+allergy>
- <http://www.hsa.ie>
- http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your_Industry/Healthcare_Sector/Latex_Gloves_Information_Sheet.pdf
- <http://latexallergyresources.org/>