American Latex Allergy Association

Are There Hidden Dangers in Food Prepared with Latex Gloves?

By: Abby Plambeck, American Latex Allergy Association Newsletter Editor

If you have a latex allergy, you could be in danger of having an allergic reaction at your local family restaurant. Recent studies have found that latex gloves worn during food preparation can shed latex proteins into the food in amounts large enough to cause reactions.

The studies were a result of multiple reports from latex-allergic individuals who claimed that they had experienced allergic reactions from eating food at restaurants that used latex gloves. One study done at the Guthrie Research Institute found that fingerprints of latex proteins were detectable on cheese and lettuce that were handled with latex gloves. No latex proteins were found on lettuce handled with vinyl gloves. You can read the abstract from this study here:

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=11061040&dopt=Abstract [1]

Awareness of this problem is increasing, thanks to state legislation and education by food industry associations. The following is a list of recent developments.

- Oregon has banned the use of latex gloves in food service facilities. (**http://www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/foodsafety/latex.cfm** [2])

- The Arizona Department of Health Services has updated the requirements for food safety in restaurants and other food establishments, and has included the rule that ?people?handling foods that are ready to eat without additional cooking must use utensils or non-latex gloves?? (**http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oeh/pdf/fy02_activity_summary.pdf** [3])

- Rhode Island has banned the use of latex gloves in food service establishments and stores licensed by the Office of Food Protection. (**http://www.health.ri.gov/environment/food/foodallergy.php** [4])

- The State Assembly of New York passed a bill that requires any food service establishment that uses latex gloves to provide written notice to consumers as follows: ?Latex gloves are used by staff in the preparation and conveyance of food in this establishment. If you are allergic to latex products, please take appropriate precautions.? (**http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A08545** [5])

- The State Senate and House of Massachusetts amended the General Laws by adding a section stating that latex gloves are banned from every food service business and that any establishment not in compliance can be assessed a fine up to $100. (**http://www.latexallergylinks.org/** [6])

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