American Latex Allergy Association

Letter from State of Wisonsin Department of Health and Family Services

DATE: September 7, 2001
TO: Regional Directors
Local Agent Health Departments
Attn: Environmental Sanitation Sanitarians
Wisconsin Restaurant Association
Tavern League of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Grocers? Association
FROM: Gregory A. Pallaske, M.S., R.S., Chief
Environmental Sanitation Section
Bureau of Environmental Health

SUBJECT: Latex Gloves in Food Operations
Issue:
Should latex gloves be utilized when handling ready-to-eat foods?

Discussion:
The new Wisconsin Food Code, adopted February 1, 2001, mandates no-bare-hand contact of ready-to-eat (RTE) foods. The code does NOT require glove use, nor does it specify the type of gloves that may be used, except they should be ?single-use? (3-301.11). While tongs, deli tissue, spatulas, and other means may be used to prevent bare hand contact, many food service facilities have opted to use gloves as the primary method of prevention.

We have received reports that a few supply houses are trying to convince operators that only the more expensive latex gloves are acceptable. This is not true- again, the gloves should be ?single-use?, and need to provide a barrier from contamination. When used in conjunction with a proper hand-washing program, any of the plastic gloves we have seen will provide adequate protection.

Besides the cost, there are additional reasons to avoid latex gloves in food handling. A number of studies have shown that individuals can and do develop allergic reactions to the proteins found in latex, so much so that the following statement was developed by a joint subcommittee of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) and the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI). It was approved by the ACAAI Board of Regents on the recommendation of the Executive Committee on July 21, 1997:

> Latex gloves should be used only as mandated by accepted Universal Precautions standards. The routine use of latex gloves by food handlers, housekeeping, transport and medical personnel in low

> risk situations (e.g. food handling, bed transport, routine physical examination) should be discouraged.

Additionally, Annex 3 of the 1999 FDA Food Code points out that:

> Natural rubber latex gloves have been reported to cause allergic reactions in some individuals who wear latex gloves during food preparation, and even in individuals eating food prepared by food employees wearing latex gloves. This information should be taken into consideration when deciding whether single-use gloves made of latex will be used during food preparation.

Occasionally, the allergies developed by individuals can be extremely severe, even life-threatening. **It has been reported that highly sensitized individuals can go into anaphylactic shock simply from eating a sandwich prepared by someone wearing latex gloves.**

Decision:
For the reasons presented above, we strongly discourage the use of latex gloves in food preparation. We ask that you share this information with your food service operators

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Reprinted from

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