American Latex Allergy Association

Sample Restaurant Letter

Date

Dear Manager,

I recently ate a meal at *(name of restaurant)* and noticed that there were latex balloons at all of the tables. I wanted to pass on some information regarding latex balloons and how they relate to latex allergy.

Latex allergy has become a public health concern, primarily because of the use of powdered, natural-rubber latex gloves. The problem started in health care workers who wore the gloves to prevent transmission of blood-borne diseases, but the gloves are now used almost everywhere. Latex allergy is problematic in that it gets worse with every exposure, symptoms can include life-threatening swelling of the airway, and there is no cure. Allergy shots have not been approved by the FDA. The allergy is showing up in many occupations, including healthcare workers, food service personnel, painters, maintenance staff, auto mechanics?anyone who routinely wears latex gloves. The powdered gloves are especially problematic because the latex protein binds to the powder, which can then hang in the air after the gloves were used. The powder containing the latex protein can then be inhaled and cause allergic reactions.

Latex balloons also contain powder to facilitate inflation. The latex protein attached to the balloon powder and hangs in the air after the balloon is inflated or deflated. Many research studies have tested and proven this and most hospitals have banned latex balloons. Many schools are also banning latex balloons because of the choking hazard they present, as well as because increasingly larger numbers of children are testing positive for latex allergy. (It?s estimated that at least 50% of children with spina bifida have latex allergy because of frequent latex exposure from surgical procedures and medical supplies.) The latex balloons in your restaurant are a concern to me since they can cause allergic reactions. Mylar balloons are acceptable for use because they don?t contain latex.

Another issue that may be of interest to you is that some states are passing legislation that bans latex gloves from being used in restaurants. There have been documented latex reactions from eating food prepared with latex gloves, because the powder carrying the latex protein is transferred to the food during preparation. Research has confirmed this. Rhode Island recently passed such a law (included in this informational packet), and has ruled that violators will be fined up to $500, and could be subject to license revocation.

I?ve included a few resources on latex allergy and current legislation. If you?re interested in more information, please contact me. I?ll gladly answer any questions.

Sincerely,
(Your name and contact information)

Items To Include In An Informational Packet For Restaurants

- Copies of recent state legislation regarding the use of natural latex gloves in the food industry.
- Copies of federal agency recommendations/citations related to latex glove use.
- A comprehensive, yet easy to understand article that describes latex allergy.
- If you?re concerned about balloons in restaurants, include an article or press release related to schools and/or hospitals banning latex balloons.

(There are resources and links available on our website (www.latexallergyresources.org[1]) to assist you in gathering information for the packet.)

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[1] http://latexallergyresources.org/