American Latex Allergy Association

How do I prepare for latex-safe emergency care?

Answered by
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Latex allergy has proven itself to be a frustrating and potentially disabling and career-ending condition. Once a person has been diagnosed, they must then educate themselves and others about latex allergy. It is important that a latex allergic individual, be treated by knowledgeable personnel in a latex-safe manner.

Many latex allergic individuals are not sure how to prepare themselves, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and hospitals to manage their needs. Those who attempt to inform EMS directors, hospital administrators or Emergency Department (ED) directors are often given the run-around, cold-shoulder and no help at all! The realization that few understand appropriate treatment guidelines can leave one feeling frustrated, angry, and scared.

Take control of your latex-safe emergency medical care needs by utilizing the following tips:

1. Get a Medic Alert bracelet or similar product and wear it at all times.
2. Place latex warning stickers on all outside doors at home, each vehicle you drive, entrance to other sites such as work site, child care. Make a portable sign for use while traveling.
3. ?Flag? your address on your area 9-1-1 enhanced system (if available). They may resist, but you should insist! Call your local EMS, police or fire department for the correct number or person to talk to.
4. Discuss with your allergist any personal latex-safe medical supply needs. Your personal Advanced Life Support jump kit may include such things as ET tubes (which require a doctor?s prescription), IV tubing, cardiac monitor electrodes and a bag-valve mask, non-latex tourniquet, and non-latex gloves in various sizes. You may not need all of these things, but better to have something and not need it than need something and not have a latex-free product. Make sure to notify you local EMS of what you have and where it is kept. Even if your local EMS has latex-safe supplies, other EMS away from home may not.
5. Write individual letters introducing yourself and latex allergy to your State EMS Director (to locate that person try: **www.co.rowan.nc.us/es/oems/memlist** [1]), local EMS Director, local hospital administrator, are Medical Society Director, local police chief and local fire chief. It should contain your name, home address and phone number, emergency treatment guidelines, information about any latex-safe EMS equipment that you need or have. A description of your usual signs/symptoms during a reaction is also useful. Include the phone number for A.L.E.R.T., Inc. and a NIOSH Alert. Also include a copy of a medical statement from your doctor indicating your condition, severity of your reaction and the importance of latex-safe treatment. The letter that you write to your local EMS director should be sent to all of the people on the list and your attorney, if you have one.
6. Arrange a face-t-face meeting with your local EMS director, EMS Commission and ED Director so they can know you and discuss your needs.

7. Before traveling, contact by phone and in writing the local ED Directors and EMS Directors at your destination. Determine if they are prepared to manage the latex allergic individual and provide them with your name, home address & phone number, temporary address & phone number, and the items listed in bold in Number 5.

For the latex allergic individual the idea of emergency medical care can be a frightening reality. If you continue to have difficulty in discussing your medical needs with EMS, contact your congressperson and local politicians. With these few tips, you can be prepared for emergency events.

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[1] http://www.co.rowan.nc.us/es/oems/memlist