American Latex Allergy Association

Lauren's Story

I first noticed issues with latex when I was in middle school and had to have a band aid from my allergy shots every week. I would get painful welts wherever the band aid adhesive touched my skin. (It?s amazing how many times after that I had to remind the nurse that I was allergic to band aids even after I saw them write it in my chart). Then, in high school, I got job in the food industry. We, like so many places, used latex gloves. My hands would get extremely itchy, red, and develop painful hives. Using nitrile gloves solved that problem.
I mentioned all this to my new allergist who tested me for latex when I had allergy testing done at her office. I tested negative for a latex allergy. So, I showed her my reaction wearing a latex glove and sure enough, I was officially diagnosed with a latex allergy?in fact a large list of allergies, chronic urticaria, solar urticaria (we would later discover). I was put back on immunotherapy and now had an epi-pen,

My allergy remained fairly constant for a few years. I would get hives and swelling from wearing latex gloves and band aids. Then, recently, I had hives constantly on my hands, arms, feet, and sometimes my chest. Nothing helped them to calm down or go away. Benadryl barely helped and it knocked me out which doesn?t help when you need to work. So, my allergist put me on prednisone. That finally helped my body to calm down. But, as soon as I was done with that prescription of prednisone, everything flared right back up. Nothing had changed in my routine. I still used scent free, dye free soap and detergent, same shampoo, etc. (I have extremely sensitive skin even if take away the latex allergy). Needless to say, I was so frustrated and losing hope of ever not being in so much pain and misery every single day unless I took steroids.

Then, my allergist said it may be a food allergy but to narrow it down would be difficult. I started researching cross reactive allergies to what I already knew I was allergic to. I found the list of latex cross reactive foods and started trying to see if that was the culprit. I eliminated potatoes, tomatoes, and bananas from my diet entirely for a week (I don?t eat the other foods on the list anyway and already knew I was allergic to shellfish). Miraculously, my hives were gone and all the swelling in my hands and feet. Completely gone. I was so relieved. To be sure, I reintroduced those foods back in my diet (one at time) and the hives and swelling returned full force. My allergist said to keep those foods out of my diet and has since been impressed that a vast majority of my symptoms of hives and swelling have remained gone. I still react to other things that just can?t be avoided considering how sensitive my skin is.

Thankfully, my allergy isn?t so bad, yet, that I react if other people wear latex gloves at my work but I can?t wear them. I have to careful buying mattresses, mindful of the gloves all my doctors use, can?t use band aids at all and just cautious overall. Like others say, it?s hard but it can be done. I?m just relieved I can walk without painful, swollen, feet covered in hives and that I can make a fist / write / do anything with my hands without pain. I carry my auvi-Q epinephrine injector, Benadryl, and prednisone, everywhere I go. Better to be safe than sorry.

Lauren

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