American Latex Allergy Association

Summer 2006, Vol.12, No. 2

School Safety Guidelines For Latex-Allergic Students

This article originally appeared in the Summer 2006 edition of *The ALERT*, Vol.12, No. 2

Although it seems like summer just started, the stores are already displaying their school supplies. It?s a reminder that the flurry of activity associated with a new school year is only a few weeks away.

Concerned parents and schools contact us year-round with requests for help in accomodating latex-allergic students. In response, the American Latex Allergy Association compiled a 72-page manual titled School Safety Guidelines For Latex-Allergic Students. The following tips appear in the manual, and are offered here as a beginning assessment and planning tool for parents and schools.

Educate School Personnel: Identify students and/or school employees who have a natural rubber latex allergy. Alert other school personnel about these students and/or employees, and about the need to minimize the sensitization risk for students or personnel who are at risk for developing the allergy. Attempt to balance two needs: Maximum inclusion of the student in school life and activities versus avoidance of a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction subsequent to natural rubber latex exposure.

A. Establish an inventory of latex-free alternatives for natural rubber latex medical equipment and school supplies.

B. Educate personnel regarding natural rubber latex allergy and related issues.

C. Implement natural rubber latex allergy guidelines pertaining to students and school personnel.

D. Provide task-appropriate, powder-free, latex-free gloves.

Identify Potential Exposure: Assess high-risk areas for students sensitized to natural rubber latex.

A. Classrooms - Remove erasers, rubber bands, art supplies, and science/lab equipment made with natural rubber latex. Provide latex-free substitutes.

B. Cafeteria - Provide latex-free gloves for food preparation. School personnel should also understand the cross-reaction between natural rubber latex and certain foods such as bananas, kiwi, avocado, chestnuts, passion fruit, celery, and melon. Foods with these substances should be clearly labeled or removed from the menu.

C. Gym and Playground - Provide substitutes for rubber mats, flooring, balls, and racquet handles. If a substitute cannot be provided, an alternate activity may need to be offered.

D. Custodial Supplies - Provide latex-free gloves for cleaning rather than natural rubber latex gloves. Protein-laden powder from natural rubber latex gloves can contaminate surfaces and remain airborne long enough to trigger a respiratory reaction.

E. Nurse?s Office - Even if a child has a separate supply of latex-free gloves and other first aid items, protein-laden powder from natural rubber latex gloves used with other children can easily contaminate surfaces and remain airborne long enough to trigger a respiratory reaction. Consider replacing all natural rubber latex gloves throughout the building with latex-free gloves, particularly for tasks that have no risk of exposure to blood or body fluids.

Develop An Emergency Protocol: Protocols should include specific plans for recognizing and treating a reaction in each child, when to call for help, and facilitating ambulance and emergency room preparedness and natural rubber latex safety. Easily accessible latex-free first aid supplies are an important part of any emergency plan.

School Safety Guidelines For Latex-Allergic Students contains several resources to help parents and schools achieve these outcomes. Some of these resources include: Sample school policies and procedures; sample individualized student health plans; position statements from the National Association of School Nurses and the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; helpful articles about other schools that have banned latex; a template for a balloon ban sign; and physician forms to be completed by the child?s allergist and kept on file at the school. The manual costs $45 and is available through the online store at **www.latexallergyresources.org/store** [1].

Life can be challenging for a latex-allergic student, but planning ahead increases the odds of the student having a normal, healthy school experience. An open, working relationship between parents and school personnel is crucial to the student?s success.

.

Reprinted from

American Latex Allergy Association

P.O. Box 198
Slinger, WI 53086
Phone: 262-677-9707 1-888-97-ALERT
Website: www.latexallergyresources.org

Source URL: http://latexallergyresources.org/summer-2006-vol12-no-2

Links:
[1] https://secure.latexallergyresources.org/store