

Latex - Are You Aware?

The medical community has become increasingly concerned about the effects of using devices that contain latex (natural rubber) for patients and staff members who are latex-sensitive. Surgical gloves and numerous components of anesthesia and surgical equipment may contain latex which can precipitate allergic reactions in latex-sensitive people. As reported in an April 1989 article in the New England Journal of Medicine, "This allergic response, called anaphylaxis, can be life-threatening."¹

Recently, AORN reported that "after the institution of universal precautions, the incidence of latex allergy in health care workers rose from 2.9% to as high as 17% in some medical centers. Because of this increasing number of latex-sensitive individuals, health care facilities must be prepared to deal with patients and health care workers who develop latex sensitivity."²

Steps in dealing with the latex issue could include, but are not limited to: educating staff members about latex sensitivity, reading all product labels for latex content, contacting product manufacturers for information on the presence of latex in their product(s), replacing a product(s) containing latex with one that is latex free, establishing treatment protocols for use in emergency situations and developing a policy and procedure addressing latex sensitivity in patients and staff.

As VALLEYLAB Clinical Information Associates, we are asked about latex on a daily basis. To be consistent with the medical industry's focus on new

policies and procedures concerning latex, VALLEYLAB is currently modifying the labeling on all its product packaging to indicate that VALLEYLAB products are in fact latex free.

The labeling modifications are ongoing. In the meantime, this letter is your assurance that latex (natural rubber) is not a component of VALLEYLAB packaging or any VALLEYLAB surgical product except for two products that VALLEYLAB no longer manufactures or sells. These two products are:

- **CUSA® NS 100 external handpiece cable sheath**
- **CUSA® NS 100 specimen trap - Catalog No. CV 242-100-000**

Although these two products are no longer manufactured or sold by VALLEYLAB, it is possible that they continue to be used in your operating room.

For more information on latex or other patient safety concerns, please call the VALLEYLAB Clinical Information Hotline at 800-255-8522, extension 2005.

- 1 J E Slater, "Rubber Anaphylaxis," The New England Journal of Medicine 320 (April 27, 1989) 1126-1130.
- 2 D M Korniewicz, K J Kelly, MD, "Barrier Protection and Latex Allergy Associated with Surgical Gloves", AORN Journal 61 (June 1995) 1037-1044.



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