

Copley Memorial Hospital

Policy & Procedure

Title: Management of Employees with Latex Allergies

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Purpose

To provide guidelines for applicants or employees with contact dermatitis, chemical sensitivity or latex allergy.

Applicability

For the purpose of this policy, Rush Copley Medical Center ("RCMC") encompasses Copley Memorial Hospital, Rush Copley Medical Group NFP, and all subsidiary corporations.

Policy

This policy establishes a standardized protocol for applicants or employees who exhibit latex sensitivity symptoms or have been diagnosed with a latex allergy. It also discusses the development of a plan to address the selection of products and ways to implement work practices to reduce the risk of allergic reaction, as well as ways to provide program and training materials about latex allergies. The medical center strives to protect and accommodate its employees' health needs and not place them in harm.

Procedure

Latex allergy should be suspected in anyone who develops certain symptoms after latex exposure.

- 1. Irritant Contact Dermatitis** or delayed hypersensitivity is a development of dry, itchy, irritated areas on the skin, usually the hands. This reaction is caused by skin irritation from wearing gloves and possibly by exposure to other workplace products and chemicals. The reaction can also result from repeated hand washing and drying, incomplete hand drying, use of cleaners and sanitizers, and exposure to powders added to the gloves. Irritant contact dermatitis does not extend past the point of material contact and is not a true allergy.
- 2. Allergic Contact Dermatitis or Chemical Sensitivity Dermatitis** is an injury to the skin that may occur first at the site of contact and will spread to other areas. Allergic contact dermatitis reactions are a response to chemicals added to latex during the latex manufacturing process. Mild symptoms can include rashes, itchy skin, and watery eyes and nose. These chemicals can cause more severe skin reactions usually presenting 24 to 96 hours after initial contact and may progress to oozing skin blisters or spread away from the area of skin touched by the latex. Chemical Sensitivity Dermatitis is not a true allergy.
- 3. IgE Mediated Latex Allergy** or immediate hypersensitivity reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure to latex, but they can occur hours later and can cause an inflammatory type reaction. Mild reactions to latex involve skin redness, hives, or itching. More severe reactions may involve respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes, scratchy throat, coughing, wheezing, facial

swelling, vomiting, reduced blood pressure, and shock. Severe reactions are systemic in nature and generally require immediate treatment in an ED.

1. Pre-Employment-Latex History

- A. New applicants who have been accepted for employment will complete the Pre-employment Health Questionnaire and the Latex Allergy Questionnaire.
- B. If a latex sensitivity, latex allergy or multiple allergic conditions are present, the applicant may be required to consent to Latex IgE testing.
- C. Positive Latex IgE results will require medical clearance by occupational health at Rush-Copley Healthcare Center.
- D. Employee Health Services in collaboration with the department manager will review the latex environment risk factors in relation to the latex IGE level to determine if employment in a latex environment is safe. If additional follow-up is needed, the applicant will be referred to their primary care physician for further medical clearance to work in a latex environment.
- E. If the health risk for working in a latex environment can be accommodated, the applicant will be placed in the position for which they were hired.
- F. If the applicant is found by his/her physician to be placing their health at risk for working in a latex environment, a job offer will not be made.

2. On-the Job Latex Sensitivity

A. Irritant Contact Dermatitis (Delayed Hypersensitivity)

1. Employees who develop repeated skin rashes are to complete an Employee Injury/Illness Report (located on the internet explorer, intranet jump page, Employee Injury Report). Complete the report and fax to Employee Health Services at 630-375-2917.
2. The Employee Health Coordinator will work with the Infection Prevention Manager and the employee to provide an approved hand sanitizer that will reduce the symptoms associated with contact dermatitis.
3. If symptoms of contact dermatitis continue after trial of various products, further evaluation may be required.

B. Allergic Contact Dermatitis (Chemical Sensitivity Dermatitis)

1. Employees who have skin reactions that occur 24-96 hours post chemical exposure must complete an Employee Injury/Illness Report (located on the internet explorer, intranet jump page, Employee Injury Report). Complete the report and fax to Employee Health Services at 630-375-2917.
2. The Employee Health Coordinator will work with the employee by providing non-latex powder free gloves, Nitrile gloves, or cotton gloves to minimize the symptoms associated with the stated sensitivity.
3. If symptoms of chemical sensitivity continue after trial of various products, further testing may be required.

C. Latex Allergy

1. Employees experiencing skin redness, hives, itching or more severe reactions must complete an Employee Injury/Illness Report (located on the internet explorer, intranet jump page, Employee Injury Report). Complete the report and fax to Employee Health Services at 630-375-2917.
2. Employees experiencing immediate hypersensitivity will be referred to the Emergency Room for immediate treatment. The employee will be required to follow-up with RCHC Occupational Health for further evaluation and return to work status.
3. The Employee Health Coordinator will submit the occupational exposure to the Worker's Compensation carrier.

4. Employee Health Services will work with the department manager and the employee to determine latex risk and precautions that can be taken on behalf of the employee for reducing exposure to latex.

3. Product Selection

- A. The Product Standardization Committee shall recommend gloves and glove products that are latex-free, powder free, and low chemical sensitivity.
- B. Powder free and/or low chemical synthetic products shall be available to all staff through Central Supply. Rush-Copley Medical Center currently supplies the following glove types:
 1. Exam gloves-100% synthetic or nitrile
 2. Sterile Surgeon Gloves-latex, powder-free
- C. A hand sanitizer shall be approved by the Infection Prevention Committee and shall be available to all staff through Central Supply to reduce symptoms of contact dermatitis and/or glove exposure.

4. Education

- A. Rush Copley shall provide staff education through policy and procedure reviews, and staff education to ensure awareness of latex allergies. Education shall discuss signs and symptoms, reporting allergic reactions, and discussion of work practices to decrease allergic reactions.