

## AV0600 - LATEX SENSITIVITY PREVENTION PROGRAM

### 1.0 PURPOSE

To promote worker health and wellness by reducing the risk of exposure to latex products in the workplace.

### 2.0 DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Latex	Natural rubber latex is a product made from the tacky, milky sap produced by the commercial rubber tree, used for its elasticity and barrier properties.
Latex allergy	An abnormal overreaction of the immune system to certain proteins in latex.
Latex sensitivity	A reaction to latex that may result in a latex allergy with repeated exposures. It typically presents as contact dermatitis.
Worker	All IH employees (contract and non-contract), physicians, volunteers, students, and/or contractors.

### 3.0 POLICY

Interior Health is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all workers. Interior Health will continue to eliminate latex products from the workplace wherever feasible.

### 4.0 LATEX PRODUCTS

Latex or natural rubber is commonly found in many household items and some medical devices. These may include, but not limited to:

- Latex/natural rubber gloves
- Bandages
- Condoms
- Balloons
- Rubber bands
- Airway and intravenous tubing
- Catheters
- Stethoscopes

### 5.0 HEALTH EFFECTS

Repeated exposure to latex may result in a higher risk of developing a latex allergy or sensitivity. Common exposure routes are via inhalation, contact with skin, and/or mucus membranes of the eyes/nose/throat/rectum/vagina. Symptoms of latex allergies/sensitivities may include:

- Skin reactions – contact dermatitis, hives or general itching.
- Respiratory reactions – stuffy or runny nose, sneezing, cough, wheezing, chest tightness and difficulty breathing.
- Life-threatening allergic reactions – anaphylaxis.

Despite contact with latex, not all skin reactions are because of the latex protein. Some skin reactions result from other chemicals used in the manufacturing process and may be misinterpreted as a latex allergy.

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Policy Steward: Director, Workplace Health & Safety	
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**6.0 PROCEDURES**

**6.1 Senior Administration (Senior Executive Team, Executive Directors, Directors)**

- Assign responsibility to the Purchasing Department to maintain ongoing research into procurement of latex-free products for the Health Authority which are less hazardous but equally suitable.
- Support budget plans that strive for a latex-free environment.
- Convey and actively foster the Health Authority’s commitment to a latex-free environment.
- Ensure that all managers/supervisors support and implement the program in their areas of responsibility.

**6.2 Managers, Supervisors**

- Ensure all workers are familiar with latex allergies/sensitivities
- Ensure workers are familiar with the [Hand Care Program](#) and resources available for prevention and early management of [skin integrity concerns](#).
- Ensure workers diagnosed with a latex allergy/sensitivity are provided with latex-free products or accommodated as required.
- If a product in the workplace is identified as containing latex, complete the [PHSA Product Investigation Form](#) to inform PHSA of the concern.
- Comply with [AV1100](#) – Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation for workers showing signs/symptoms of latex allergies or sensitivities.

**6.3 Workers**

- Participate and be aware of this Latex Sensitivity Prevention Program and any available training.
- Inform their supervisor of any concerns of latex use in the workplace.
- Review the [Hand Care Program](#) resources for prevention and early management of skin integrity concerns.
- Perform [Routine Practices](#) according to the Health Authority’s policies and procedures.
- Comply with [AV1100](#) – Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation for workers showing signs/symptoms of latex allergies or sensitivities.

**6.4 Workplace Health and Safety Department**

- Ensure the program remains relevant by updating as necessary and at minimum reviewing every 3 years.
- Support investigations and assist with finding alternative products and accommodation when a latex allergy/sensitivity is reported.

**6.5 Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee and Worker Health and Safety Representatives**

- Monitor the effectiveness of the latex policy through review of incident reports and investigations and make recommendations to management as required to improve the program.

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- Participate and support the Health Authority's ongoing pursuit of suitable latex-free products.

## 7.0 RELATED POLICIES AND TOOLS

- [AV0100](#) – Occupational Health & Safety Program.
- [AV1100](#) – Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation.
- [Hand Care Program](#).
- [Prevention and Remediation Guidelines - Skin Integrity Concerns related to Personal Protective Equipment](#).

## 8.0 REFERENCES

- WorkSafeBC, [Dealing with Latex Allergies at Work](#), 2011.

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