

# Policy On Natural Rubber Latex Gloves

## OHS Policy Document: OHS 2/06

### Introduction

This policy includes elements of broader University policies so that the requirements in relation to the use of natural rubber latex gloves are more readily apparent.

Symptoms of allergy to natural rubber latex (NRL) range from minor complaints such as a rash or inflammation of the nose or eyes, to asthma and occasionally to anaphylactic shock. Once acquired, latex allergy is a lifelong condition. The greatest occupational risk of developing, or aggravating symptoms of, latex allergy is associated with the wearing of NRL gloves. Skin and respiratory exposures to NRL, respectively, occur during glove use and at the time of removal of the glove from the hand. In the latter circumstance, glove particles released into the air and deposited onto surfaces may also present a latex exposure risk to bystanders. If powder has been placed inside the gloves, the intensity of skin and respiratory exposure to NRL can increase dramatically.

NRL gloves have traditionally been selected for use in the workplace because of their intrinsic features and because suitable alternatives have not been available or considered. The intrinsic features include a high degree of dexterity, sensitivity, microbiological protection and durability. In recent times, however, technical and chemical developments have led to the manufacture of a range of non-latex gloves that allow most non-sterile, and some sterile, tasks to be undertaken adequately and more safely. Also, it has been recognised that, where it is essential that NRL gloves are used, the amount of NRL within the gloves (and the allergenic risk) can be reduced considerably while retaining the properties of the product. Over the same time, government guidelines and expectations relating to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations have progressively developed. In particular, it would be expected that NRL gloves are used only after a written COSHH assessment has been undertaken. This is already noted in [University COSHH Policy Statement](#). Where an assessment has been undertaken, it should note that health surveillance will be carried out for those staff that might be exposed to latex. The extent and detail of the health surveillance will be related to the degree of risk identified by the COSHH assessment and in consultation with Occupational Health Services. However, regular enquiry for dermatitis and asthma is normally all that is required. This may be undertaken verbally or by written questionnaire so long as an appropriate record of the health surveillance is recorded.

### Policy

1. NRL gloves should not be used where there are acceptable non-latex alternatives. Where NRL gloves are required as personal protective equipment they should be chosen in accordance with [University Policy Statement S3/02 'Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992'](#). Further advice on gloves is available from Area Safety Officers or the Safety Office.
2. Any use of NRL gloves must be the subject of a written COSHH assessment, by the respective department, consistent with [\(COSHH\) Policy Statement S6/05](#). Where NRL gloves are considered essential, gloves with as low a level of extractable (or leachable) protein as is reasonably practicable should be used (manufacturing standards of less than 50µg/g are reasonably achieved). Powdered latex gloves must never be used.
3. Staff who wear latex gloves should be registered for health surveillance with Occupational Health Services.
4. Where there is any concern that an individual has or may have developed latex allergy then the Occupational Health Service should be notified immediately, so that the individual and their exposure circumstances can be assessed and managed.

<b>Policy Author:</b>	Occupational Health Services	<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Occupational Health Services
<b>Last Reviewed On:</b>	4th May 2016	<b>Next Review Date:</b>	May 2019
<b>Policy Scope:</b>	Applies to all University staff		
<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Revision History</b>		
4th May 2016	No changes made		

**THIS STATEMENT FORMS PART OF THE UNIVERSITY OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE POLICY.**