

	<b>080.901.047 Latex Safe Environment</b>
Location: Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)\Chemical Biological Hazards	Version: 9.50
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Electronic Approval: Hill, Colin (Director, Human Resources)	Approval Date: 12/21/2020
Review Frequency: Annual	Next Review Date: 11/01/2019

**PURPOSE AND SCOPE:**

Provide a latex safe environment in consideration of health needs and concerns of those sensitive and non-sensitive individuals alike at Markham Stouffville Hospital.

**POLICY STATEMENT(S):**

Every reasonable effort will be made to create a latex safe environment to all persons at Markham Stouffville Hospital, due to the potential allergic reaction that may arise from exposure to latex. Latex balloons are banned from the hospital.

**PROCEDURE:**

<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	
Employees, Professional Staff, Volunteers and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees, Professional staff, volunteers and students who develop or have potential latex allergies during the employment at the hospital shall contact Occupational Health and Safety Department and complete the online IReport. Any serious reactions go to Emergency immediately for medical attention.</li> <li>• Known latex allergic employees, Professional staff, volunteers and students will avoid any contact with latex balloons, and other identifiable latex products.</li> <li>• Advise families or visitors that latex products, such as balloons, are not permitted at the hospital and should be removed as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
Director/ Manager or Delegate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where feasible, purchase/source/provide non-latex versions of current latex containing products.</li> <li>• Ensure that if there are latex-containing products, they are clearly identified and communicated to employees, students, volunteers, Professional staff and users regarding the latex contents of those products.</li> <li>• Accommodate employees who have latex allergies in consultation with Occupational Health and Safety.</li> </ul>
Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include latex allergies as part of the new employee medical assessment.</li> <li>• Assist in accommodations of employees with health concerns for latex allergies.</li> </ul>

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Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check visitors entering the hospital with balloons to ensure that they are not latex.</li> <li>• Educate visitors about the latex safe environment policy. Do not allow latex balloons to enter patient units or enter hospital. Keep all identified latex balloons at the front reception and notify the recipient. Mylar balloons are acceptable.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	
All employees, Professional staff and volunteers	Families or visitors of patients in the hospital will be educated by employees and volunteers, about latex allergies, and will be asked to take home any identified latex products (i.e. balloons) which have been brought on site, as soon as possible. Signs are displayed at the hospital entrances as a reminder that this is a latex safe environment (Appendix A). Employees, Professional staff, students and volunteers are provided this information as part of the New Hire Handbook and in the Occupational Health and Safety Handbook on LiMe.

**DEFINITION(S):**

**Latex Allergy** – An adverse reaction to products made from latex or natural rubber. Reactions may occur when rubber objects come into contact with the skin or mucous membranes or when latex proteins are released into the air from powdered latex gloves.

Common reaction to latex products is the development of dry, itchy, and irritated areas on the skin (**irritant contact dermatitis**), usually the hands. Other reactions may include rashes and skin blisters which can spread away from the area of skin touched by the latex (**allergic contact dermatitis**). This reaction is similar to a typical poison ivy reaction. More severe reactions may involve immediate hypersensitivity with respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes, scratchy throat and asthmatic symptoms including coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and more severe reactions such as swelling of the face, lips and airways. Rarely, shock may occur. However, a life-threatening reaction is seldom the first sign of latex allergy.

**Mylar balloons** – An air-tight metal film bag made out of polyester film that can be inflated with air or gas. The foil can be shiny and reflective, and printed with very bright designs.

**REFERENCE(S):**

“Latex Allergy.” Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. September 28, 2016.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

Not Applicable.

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

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<b>Required Endorsements</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Approval Authority</b>
Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees	Occupational Health and Safety	Chief Human Resources Officer

**DOCUMENT HISTORY:**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Individual/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
New	Manager, Occupational Health and Safety Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees	02/19/2008	Approved
Revised	Manager, Occupational Health and Safety Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees	10/10/1998; 11/09/2008; 25/11/2009; 09/02/2011; 20/03/2012; 17/05/2013; 01/05/2014; 01/05/2015; 01/05/2016	Approved
Revised	Director, Human Resources, Occupational Health and Safety Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees	01/06/2017; 22/05/2018; 09/11/2018; 14/12/2020;	Approved

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Appendix A

# LATEX-SAFE ENVIRONMENT



**Latex can cause a severe allergic reaction.  
In an effort to reduce the risk of exposure to natural  
rubber latex, latex balloons are not allowed in the hospital.  
Mylar balloons are acceptable.**

For more information, visit [www.msh.on.ca](http://www.msh.on.ca) or ask at the information desk.



