

5.28 Latex-Free Policy

Part 1. Purpose

Central Lakes College (CLC) recognizes its responsibility for the health, welfare, and safety of students, faculty, administration, and staff. The purpose of the Latex-Free Policy is to reduce, so far as is reasonably possible, students' and employees' exposure to latex on CLC campuses. This policy applies to CLC employees, students, visitors, and events on CLC campuses. This policy does not apply to academic programs or departments that need latex-containing supplies or equipment as part of their job, where no alternative is available. In such cases, the department and tasks identified in this policy will be exempt to help minimize exposure. Nitrile or vinyl gloves are generally a good replacement for latex gloves. Please see the Safety Officer if you have questions on glove selection.

Part 2. Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one in 10 people is sensitive to natural rubber latex. Among individuals with latex allergy, repeated exposure to latex results in sensitization and an increased risk of allergic reactions. Federal law requires medical products and packaging with natural rubber latex to carry a statement on the label: "Caution: This Product Contains Natural Rubber Latex Which May Cause Allergic Reactions." However, products do not need to be labeled "latex-free," so creating a latex-free environment can be challenging. Serious reactions to latex and related health problems among latex-sensitive individuals can be minimized or prevented with a thorough understanding of the risks of latex allergies and by implementing strategies to reduce these risks.

Part 3. Prevention Measures

Latex allergy can be prevented by protecting employees from undue latex exposure. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that employees and employers take the following steps to protect workers from latex exposure and allergy in the workplace:

- A. Appropriate barrier protection is necessary when handling infectious materials. For example, if latex gloves are required, use powder-free gloves with reduced protein content.
- B. Use non-latex gloves when there is little potential for contact with infectious materials (e.g., food service).
- C. Ensure employees use good housekeeping practices to remove latex-containing dust from the workplace (frequently clean contaminated areas and regularly change ventilation filters and vacuum bags).
- D. Provide employees with education programs and training materials about latex allergy. Employees should be familiar with procedures to prevent latex allergy and learn to recognize its symptoms.
- E. Screen high-risk employees for latex allergy symptoms periodically. Detecting symptoms early and preventing further latex exposure is essential for preventing long-term effects.
- F. Evaluate current prevention strategies whenever an employee is diagnosed with latex allergy.

- G. After removing latex gloves, please wash your hands with mild soap and dry them thoroughly.

Individuals who develop symptoms of latex allergy should avoid direct contact with latex gloves and other latex-containing products until evaluated by a physician experienced in diagnosing latex allergy.

* NIOSH Publication No. 97-135, June 1997

Part 4. College Responsibilities

Employees who use and/or procure supplies for Central Lakes College shall abide by the following rules:

- A. Use of latex gloves is prohibited except when deemed exempt from this policy.
- B. Use/display of latex balloons is prohibited.
- C. Educational materials on latex allergies are available to students/employees upon request through the Safety Officer.
- D. If necessary, employees will be shown proper skin protection techniques for working with staff who are sensitive or allergic to latex.
- E. Departments should identify existing items on campus that contain latex. As existing equipment is replaced, no-latex equipment should be purchased if available.
- F. If non-latex materials are unavailable, skin contact precautions will be utilized with anyone with a latex allergy or sensitivity.
- G. Signage shall be used in areas with a risk of latex exposure.

Part 5. Employee Responsibilities

- A. Notify your supervisor if you have a latex allergy.
- B. Notify your supervisor if you see latex-containing materials in your work area.
- C. Notify your supervisor if you have a latex allergy in the workplace. After you receive medical care, you and your supervisor should submit a First Report of Injury Form.

Part 6. Students and visitors use

- A. Faculty and staff shall ensure that affected students and visitors comply with the above guidelines as applicable.

Part 7. Exemptions

- A. Catheters are used for training purposes in the nursing program.
- B. Glove use and latex-containing chemicals for Agricultural programs.
- C. Student Life and partners distribute condoms, and the theater shop uses them for waterproofing electronics.
- D. Emergency medical personnel were dispatched to campuses.
- E. Yoga mats were bought for campus use.

Date of implementation/Presidential Approval: 10/25/2022

Date of last review: 7/31/2025