



FAST FACT, REF FF:012:02

HSE POLICY ON THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LATEX ALLERGY 2022

FAST FACTS provide a brief overview of various health and safety topics to support our managers, employees, safety representatives and others. Why not bring this to your Safety Committees/Departmental Meeting for discussion? Additional information is available by visiting our website at: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/health-and-safety/>

This FAST FACT provides a brief overview of the **HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Latex Allergy 2022**. The policy can be downloaded [here](#).

DID YOU KNOW THAT Health Care Workers (HCWs) are the occupational group most affected by Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) Allergy owing to their frequent use of latex gloves.

DEFINITIONS (AS PER POLICY)

Latex-free describes products that are not manufactured from natural rubber latex.

Latex-safe describes an environment that minimises the risk of a reaction occurring in sensitised or allergic individuals. This is achieved by removing the NRL products.



POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the HSE to:

- Ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of its healthcare workers and others who may be affected by its work activities.
- Reduce, to the lowest level reasonably practicable, the exposure of HCWs and patients to Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) and provide articles that are safe and without risk to health.
- Reduce, as far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of sensitised individuals being exposed to NRL.
- Ensure that where available, latex free products shall be used so far as is reasonably practicable. Where it is not practicable to use latex free products, e.g. surgical latex gloves, the HSE recommends that only low protein (less than 50ug/mg) latex powder free gloves or synthetic equivalent e.g. Nitrile, Polyisoprene, Neoprene are used.
- Make appropriate health surveillance available to HCWs exposed to NRL.
- Provide HCWs with necessary information and training.
- Record and report as appropriate all incidences of allergy.
- Manage HCWs and patients who develop an NRL allergy in such a way as to minimise the risk of ill health effects.
- Ensure arrangements are in place to monitor and review the effectiveness of the HSE's programme for managing latex allergy.

PURPOSE

- The purpose of this policy is to set out the HSE's chosen approach to managing the risks to patients, HCWs and others who may be exposed to Natural Rubber Latex (NRL).

SCOPE

The policy applies to those who are:

- Responsible for, or work in an area where products containing Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) may be used or handled.
- Involved in the procurement of medical equipment/devices/clothing.
- Involved in the setting of clinical/procurement where the policy may have an impact on the use of products containing NRL.

In line with the [HSE Code of Governance \(2021\)](#) Section 38 and Section 39 organisations are to adopt this policy or develop a policy of their own which is consistent with this policy and provide an assurance to the HSE regarding same.

KEY HEALTH AND LEGISLATION

- Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations 2001 to 2021
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 to 2021
- Social Welfare (Consolidated Occupational Injuries) Regulations 2007 to 2015
- Medical Devices Directive (93/42/EEC) and amendment Regulations



MANAGER’S KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure that all Healthcare Workers (HCWs) are aware of and implement this Policy.
- Ensure that all hazards and risks to HCWs and patients associated with NRL allergy are identified and assessed, and appropriate measures are put in place.

EMPLOYEE’S KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Adhere to and apply this Policy, local procedures and safe systems of work and any associated risk assessments and risk controls.

Detailed Roles and Responsibilities including Surgeons and Anaesthetists, Pharmacy Managers, Procurement and Occupational Health Services are detailed in the HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Latex Allergy 2022.

RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH LATEX

- History of anaphylaxis to latex or a positive skin prick test to latex.
- History of allergy / sensitivity to latex e.g. itching, swelling or redness.
- High risk groups without history of latex sensitivity.

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In order to minimise the risk from natural rubber latex (NRL), risk assessments must be undertaken to ensure that the exposure of HCWs and patients to NRL is avoided where reasonably practicable, and adequately controlled in all other circumstances. The General Risk Assessment form CF:005 can be downloaded [here](#).

The risk assessment process for a given task comprises of the following

FOUR STEPS which are detailed in Section 2.0, Part A of the Policy:

- Step 1** - Identify the **Hazard** associated with the work activity
- Step 2** - Identify the **Risks** associated with the hazard
- Step 3** - **Assess** and Rate the Risk
- Step 4** - Identify any **additional control measures**.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- Health and Safety Authority Prevention of Glove-related Latex Allergy in Healthcare Workers. Available [here](#).

General Risk Assessment Form				
Division:		Source of Risk:		
HS/CHO/NAS/Function:		Primary Impact Category:		
Hospital Site/Service:		Risk Type:		
Dept/Service Site:		Name of Risk Owner (BLOCKS):		
Date of Assessment:		Signature of Risk Owner:		
Unique ID No:		Risk Co-Ordinator:		
		*Risk Assessor (s):		
**HAZARD & RISK DESCRIPTION	EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES	ADDITIONAL CONTROLS REQUIRED	ACTION OWNER (i.e. the Person responsible for the action)	DUE DATE
INITIAL RISK		Risk Status		
Likelihood	Impact	Initial Risk Rating	Open	Monitor
				Closed