Winnipeg Regional Health Authority / Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg — Caring for Health / À l'écoute de notre santé	Level: **REGIONAL PROGRAM** Applicable to all sites and facilities where the WRHA Programs / Services are delivered		1A
	Policy Name: **Latex Safe Environment for Patients**	Policy Number: 110.000.390	Page: 1 of 5
POLICY	Approval Signature: *Original signed by M. Sussman*	Section: CLINICAL /PROGRAM SERVICES	
	Date: August 2016	Supercedes: New	

1.0 PURPOSE:

1.1 To standardize the identification and management of Patients with a Latex Allergy.

1.2 To protect the Patient with a known or suspected Latex Allergy from contact with Latex while receiving care.

1.3 To support efforts to achieve a Latex Safe Environment for Patients.

2.0 DEFINITIONS:

2.1 Latex**:** A term used to describe products made using Natural Rubber Latex process or dry rubber Latex process. "Latex" in this policy refers to the subtypes of Latex that are known to cause an allergic response:

- Natural Rubber Latex is a sensitizer found in medical supplies such as some surgical or exam gloves, blood pressure cuffs, catheters, oxygen masks, tubing, elastic wrap, etc. Natural Rubber Latex can cause an immune response in humans after initial exposure, leading to development of allergic reactions if re-exposed at a later time. Rarely, some people who are sensitive to Latex also may react to other rubber products such as erasers, rubber toy parts, rubber bands, rubber in medical devices and rubber in the elastic in clothing, etc.
- Dry Natural Rubber Hardened Rubber, which can be found in athletic shoes, tires and rubber balls, does not cause Latex Allergy in most people.

2.2 Latex Allergy (Latex Allergic): A sensitized response to Latex protein from natural rubber sources. Latex Allergic is anyone who has experienced a reaction to Latex or Latex-containing products. Latex antigens may be transmitted by direct contact with rubber/Latex products and/or by airborne routes. Latex Allergy may result from reaction to rubber additives, producing typically a rash at site of contact.

2.3 Latex Precautions: Actions taken to avoid/reduce exposure of Latex when a patient has a Latex Allergy or is a high risk to develop Latex Allergy.

2.4 Latex Reaction: a local or systemic allergic response that occurs with exposure to Latex products. Can include skin redness, skin rash or hives, breathing difficulties, anxiety, rapid heart rate, swelling of lips and throat, shock, or cardiac arrest. Reaction can occur within minutes.

2.5 Latex Safe Environment: A term used to describe an environment that minimizes the risk of a Latex Reaction occurring in sensitized or allergic individuals. This is achieved by either removing, when there is an alternate substitute, or reducing inventory of Natural Rubber Latex products that are most likely to cause a reaction.

2.6 Patient: Any individual receiving healthcare provided by a WRHA facility, program or funded site regardless of whether they are referred to as Patient, client or resident.

2.7 Staff: All persons employed by the WRHA facilities, or WRHA funded facilities, as well as members of the medical staff, volunteers, board members, students and others associated through contracts.

- Direct Care Staff: All Staff that comes in contact with Patients, Patient care environment, Patient care equipment, and blood or body fluids. This includes but not limited to physicians, nurses, Allied Health (occupational therapist, respiratory therapist, physiotherapist, speech language pathologist, dietitian, pharmacist, laboratory and diagnostic imaging technologists, etc.), and support services (health care aides, home support workers, housekeeping, porters, transfer personnel, specific volunteers, unit clerks, and others as deemed appropriate by each site/area/program).
- Non Direct Care Staff: All Staff that does not have direct contact with Patients, Patient care environment, Patient care equipment and blood and body fluids. This also includes corporate sites/areas.

3.0 **POLICY:**

3.1 Products that are not made with Natural Rubber Latex, where reasonably practical and possible, shall be procured and made readily available for care of Latex Allergic Patients and Patients who have a suspected Latex Allergy. This applies to medical equipment, devices, supplies, and clothing as well as to general purpose supplies not directly involved in the care of Patients (e.g., office supplies; chairs; capital equipment, etc.).

3.2 Screening for Latex Allergy shall be performed in conjunction with other allergy screening or collection of a Patient's health history.

3.3 Standardized procedures shall be used for care of Patients with a Latex Allergy and Patients at high risk of developing Latex Allergy.

3.4 Non-essential items that have a high content of Natural Rubber Latex should be avoided within facilities/programs (e.g., Latex balloons, etc.).

4.0 PROCEDURE:

4.1 *Supplies for the Patient with a Latex Allergy*

4.1.1 Maintain a supply of products that are not made with Natural Rubber Latex for frequently used items appropriate to the Patient population in a central care location or cart, or highlight through signage or other means the supplies/equipment on the unit that contain Latex.
http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/safety/files/latex-safe-signage.pdf

4.1.2 Contact the Pharmacy Department for current information on Latex content of medications currently stored on the unit or that need to be available for the care of the Patient with Latex Allergy.

4.1.3 Check manufacturers' labels on all equipment/supplies before use for the care of a Patient with known or high risk of Latex Allergy.

NOTE: Packaging/shipping boxes may be the only place where Latex/Latex-safe is indicated.

4.1.4 If a product is required and must not be made with Natural Rubber Latex, state that on the requisition for the supply. Review stock lists in the Patient care area to confirm which items contain Natural Rubber Latex.

4.2 *Identification of Patients with Latex Allergy*

4.2.1 During routine allergy screening, ask the Patient if s/he is allergic or sensitive to Latex. Be familiar with the population "at risk" for Latex Allergy. The "at risk" population includes Patients who:

a) have had multiple abdomen, penis, vagina, or bladder procedures especially starting in infancy (e.g., people with spina bifida);
b) work in the medical and dental profession and who have had daily exposure to Latex products;
c) have a history of allergies and asthma including allergic skin reactions, medical conditions that cause skin to become inflamed (e.g., eczema), hay fever, or allergic inflammation of nose tissues (e.g., allergic rhinitis);
d) have a history of reactions to Latex (e.g., Latex balloons, condoms, gloves, etc.);
e) have a history of a life-threatening allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) of unknown cause during surgery;
f) are allergic to certain foods including but not limited to bananas, avocados, kiwi, chestnuts, tomatoes and potatoes.

4.3 *Care of the Patient with Latex Allergy*

4.3.1 If a Patient is identified as Latex Allergic:

a) Place an allergy band on the Patient. For outpatients, advise the Patient to wear a medical identification device;
b) Place an allergy alert on the Patient's health record (electronic or paper);

c) For inpatients place a Latex Precautions alert above the Patient's bed or care area;
d) Identify Latex Allergy on all requisitions for blood and diagnostic testing;
e) Identify Latex Allergy on all physician order forms and prescriptions.

Discard each medication vial after a single poke entry through the stopper and change the needle prior to administration.

4.3.2 If a Patient has arrived with an established IV/tubing and you are unsure whether the IV/tubing contains Natural Rubber Latex, change solution and tubing as soon as possible.

4.3.3 Be alert for signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction to Latex. Reactions can appear as any of the following, alone or in combination and can lead to a serious life-threatening reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis):

a) Itchy eyes
b) Skin rash or hives (e.g., urticaria)
c) Generalized itching (e.g., pruritus)
d) Swelling of the lips, tongue, throat, face, eyes (e.g., angioedema)
e) Difficulty breathing
f) Wheezing
g) Rapid heart rate
h) Low blood pressure (e.g., hypotension)
i) Constriction of the airways in the lungs (e.g., bronchospasm)
j) Loss of consciousness

4.3.4 Make resuscitative equipment and emergency drugs that do not contain Natural Rubber Latex readily available to treat serious life-threatening (e.g., anaphylactic) reactions. For outpatients, advise the Patient to have medication prescribed for self-treatment of a serious allergic reaction available at all times.

4.3.5 Use only products that are not made with Natural Rubber Latex, including gloves, when caring for the Patient.

4.3.6 Remove all Latex-containing products from the immediate Patient care area/room. If unable to find an alternative that is not made with Natural Rubber Latex, adequately cover the Latex product so that the Latex does not come into direct contact with the Patient (e.g., covering foam/rubber pads on crutches with stockinette bandage, placing tourniquet over rather than under patient's shirtsleeve).

4.4 ***Care of the Latex Allergic Patient Undergoing Surgery or Procedures:***

4.4.1 Whenever possible, schedule the Patient as the first procedure of the day if the Patient is booked for surgery, cardiac catheterization or an interventional radiology procedure. Use a theatre that has been terminally cleaned. "Air exchange table to determine length of time to air out room before it is deemed safe for a patient with a latex allergy: http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/ipc/files/manuals/acutecare/Air_Exchange_Table.pdf

4.4.2 Contact the operating room/post anesthesia care unit and/or laboratory in which cardiac catheterization or other interventional radiology procedure is performed as soon as possible (preferably 24 hours) prior to each procedure.

4.4.3 Post a Latex Precautions sign on the doors and supply cupboards of the operating room/ post anesthesia care unit, cardiac catheterization or other interventional radiology laboratory where the Patient is receiving care. http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/safety/files/latex-precautions-poster.pdf

4.4.4 Use products that are not made with Natural Rubber Latex to set up the sterile field of the operating room/post anesthesia care unit and/or laboratory in which cardiac catheterization or other interventional radiology procedure is performed.

4.4.5 Notify inpatient units if the Latex Allergic Patient is coming from the operating room/ post anesthesia care unit as same day admit surgeries.

5.0 **REFERENCES**:

5.1 Recommendations for labeling medical products to inform users that the product or product container is not made with natural rubber latex: Guidance for industry and Food and Drug Administration staff. December 2014 Available: https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/12/02/2014-28265/recommendations-for-labeling-medical-products-to-inform-users-that-the-product-or-product-container#h-9

5.2 Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Primary Care Operational Guidelines: Working Towards Latex Safe Environments (Contact and Airborne) Prevention and Management. October 2014

5.3 University Hospital of South Manchester. Policy on Latex Allergy. September 2012 Available: http://www.uhsm.nhs.uk/AboutUs/Policies/Latex%20Allergy%20Policy%20V2.00.pdf

Policy Contact(s): Isabelle Jarrin, CNS, Quality Improvement and Patient Safety; or