

What Restaurant Owners, Managers & Workers Need to Know About the Ban on Latex Gloves



Proteins in latex gloves can cause serious, even life-threatening allergic reactions. Since March 1, 2003, the use of latex gloves in food service establishments and mobile food units has been prohibited. This rule is a public health and safety action that will protect both restaurant workers and customers from exposure to latex proteins.

Fortunately, there are many affordable single-use, form fitting non-latex gloves available from distributors and restaurant suppliers. Latex glove alternatives include synthetic latex and vinyl. Various sizes and form fitting options are available in these materials. Latex, synthetic, and vinyl gloves cost about the same.

Reminder: The use of gloves in food service is optional. The most important method of preventing the spread of is frequent and thorough handwashing. Hands must be washed for 20 seconds prior to wearing glove and again after removing them.

Food Service Workers Alert Latex Gloves Can Cause Dangerous Allergic Reactions

Some people who work with latex gloves may have serious allergic reactions. Latex gloves can cause:

- Red, itchy skin rash
- Hives
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Sinus problems
- Breathing problems (asthma)
- Life-threatening reactions

How can you get an allergic reaction from latex gloves?

- If you wear or touch latex gloves or latex finger cots.
- If you touch or eat food that someone else has touched with latex gloves.
- If you breathe latex particles in the air.

Who can get allergic problems from latex?

- Workers who wear latex gloves a lot.
- People who have allergies, hay fever, asthma or skin problems.
- Customers who eat or touch food that was handled by someone wearing latex gloves.
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How can you prevent latex allergy problems?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) says that latex gloves can cause serious allergic reactions. Employers and workers should follow these directions:

- Latex gloves or latex finger cots should not be used in any food preparation or food service area.
- Employers should provide workers with vinyl, polyvinyl chloride or other non-latex gloves.
- Think of latex as a food contaminant.

Remember even when wearing gloves, wash your hands often to stop the spread of disease.

It makes good business sense to protect workers and customers from allergic reactions that are easy to prevent.