

Latex banned at Johns Hopkins Hospital

January 18 2008

The landmark Baltimore hospital where latex gloves were invented has become the first major medical institution in the United States to ban latex products.

The Johns Hopkins Hospital announced Friday that it will no longer use latex gloves and nearly all medical latex products.

"Latex hospital gloves were invented here, so it's only fitting that Johns Hopkins takes the initiative to promoting alternatives," says anesthesiologist Robert H. Brown, who chairs the hospital's Latex Task Force.

Key early research on the problems of latex as an allergen was conducted at Hopkins by immunologists Robert Hamilton, Ph.D., and Franklin Adkinson, M.D.

Studies show some 15 percent of healthcare workers are allergic to latex.

In addition to surgical gloves, latex is used in numerous medical devices such as tourniquets, blood pressure cuffs and stethoscope tubes.

Severe allergic reactions to latex are similar to those caused by peanuts and bee stings and include a drop in blood pressure, irregular heart beat, swelling in the hands and feet and constriction of airways.

In extreme cases, latex exposure can lead to anaphylactic shock.

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Citation: Latex banned at Johns Hopkins Hospital (2008, January 18) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-01-latex-johns-hopkins-hospital.html>

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