



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health Division

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EXCLUSION OF LATEX GLOVES

Effective January 1, 2020, California Senate Bill (SB) 677 was passed excluding the use of latex gloves in food service. Incidences of latex allergies have increased due to widespread exposure of products containing natural rubber latex. It is estimated that 6% of the population has latex allergy. Of this, up to 17% of healthcare workers, 11% of the elderly, up to 73% of children with spina bifida and up to 34% of children with three or more surgical procedures have allergy to latex. The likeliness of becoming allergic increases with increased exposure. The severity of an allergic reaction increases over time and at smaller exposures. There is no cure for latex allergy.

Latex allergies can be triggered by contact with products containing natural rubber latex, inhaling airborne latex protein particles, or ingestion of food handled using latex gloves. Symptoms of a latex allergy include itching, flushing, hives, rashes, swelling, asthma symptoms (choking, shortness of breath, wheezing and coughing) , gastrointestinal reactions (severe vomiting and diarrhea), confusion from hypoxia, and life threatening anaphylactic reactions (airway swelling, respiratory failure, severe decline of blood pressure, and potential death). Exposure to rubber latex is the second leading cause of anaphylaxis in an operating room.

There is a growing concern that, much like in a health care setting, latex sensitivity will increase in food service. Food employees can develop sensitivity to latex because they are in contact with it when using gloves to prepare food. Food service consumers can be sensitized or experience allergic reactions because their food is prepared using latex gloves.

To decrease the incidence of latex related allergic reactions, AB 677 changed California Retail Food Code to include the following changes:

- **The use of latex gloves is prohibited in food facilities and retail food establishments.**

Reference language can be found in California Health and Safety Code Sections 113961 and 113973.

California Retail Food Code regulations require that bare hand contact with ready to eat-to eat-foods be minimized. The following gloves can be used to minimize bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods:

- Nitrile
- Polyethylene
- Polyvinyl
- Chloroprene/ Neoprene

Glove use in addition to handwashing is encouraged, but other means to preventing bare hand contact can be used. Below are some alternative methods:

- Stainless steel tongs, spoons, scoops, and other utensils
- Plastic utensils
- Deli paper

Please contact the Environmental Health Division at (831) 454-2022 regarding any latex glove questions. District health inspection staff are generally in the office between 8AM and 9AM Monday through Friday (excluding holidays).