

Special case study on cross contamination: the use of latex during the preparation of products and the risk of allergic reactions

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What is latex? (I)

With the term

natural latex

we refer to

natural latex deriving from natural rubber

it comes from rubber tree

(*Hevea bresiliensis*)

a tropical plant of

Euphorbiaceae family

What is latex? (II)

Initially latex is an emulsion of:

**Water - Rubber particles - Inorganic salts – Rosins
Sugars - Proteins**

To get the final product, other ingredients must be added:

Ammonia and Chemical solvents (aromatic, aliphatic and chlorinated hydrocarbons), sulphur, paraffin, chlorine and antistatic agents, accelerators and antioxidants

At the end of industrial production latex contains:

many **protein chains with antigenic power**

which **might trigger an allergic reaction**

What is latex allergy?

- It is a clinical manifestation, continuously increasing, triggered by proteins contained in «ammoniac» latex, with high antigenic activity
- The reaction involves skin, both cardiovascular and respiratory systems, and in some cases it is fatal

ABOUT 40,000 ITEMS CONTAIN LATEX!

Contact with latex antigens

It may happen:

- directly
through skin, mucosae, blood
- indirectly
inhaling powders containing latex antigens

One of the main transport means is **talcum**,
utilized as lubricant of **rubber gloves**

Latex + food cross contamination

There is evidence of cross-sensitization among latex and food (some vegetables)

FOOD, contaminated by latex containers or gloves, may trigger allergic reactions like the ones directly triggered by latex*

Why using latex gloves in food manipulation?

According to **Regulation (EC) No 178/2002** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and **laying down procedures in matters of food safety** and the **Regulation (EC) No 852/2004** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 **on the hygiene of foodstuffs**, is encouraged the use of GHP manuals, **but, since the manuals we know only recommend to ...wash properly hands and nails before entering in production areas...and do not prescribe to use latex gloves...**

WHY RISK TRIGGERING ALLERGIC REACTIONS IN KEEPING THEIR USE?

What might be recommended to European Food Industry (I)

Considering that the use of latex gloves:

- Can be non-compulsory, provided Good Health Practices are followed by carefully washing hands and cleaning nails,
- Might trigger dangerous allergic reactions

What might be recommended to European Food Industry (II)

Our requests to European Food Industry are:

- 1. Do not include gloves use in your GHP, if not compulsory**
- 2. If the use of gloves must be prescribed, avoid the ones containing latex**
- 3. If latex gloves are not avoided: inform clearly the public, (for instance printing on the label) that food was manipulated with latex gloves**

Thank you!

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