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www.handlingyouwithcare.com

(credits to <http://www.medicalexaminationgloves.com/products/latex-gloves/>)

Latex Medical Examination Gloves

Here's a bit of trivia you didn't know: Latex is the original material used to create medical examination gloves. Due to their great durability and flexibility of natural rubber, latex gloves continue to be used in the medical industry.



Latex disposable exam gloves have been the traditional choice for the healthcare industry for more than 100 years. Although concerns regarding latex allergies continue, latex gloves are unsurpassed when it comes to durability, tactile sensitivity, comfort, and fit.

Latex Medical Glove Benefits

- High Tactile Sensitivity
- Durability
- Comfort
-

Latex Medical Glove Shortcomings

- Latex Allergy
- Dry, Irritated Skin



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Latex Medical Examination Gloves: History

Since the mid 1900s, latex gloves have been primarily manufactured in Malaysia. Malaysia continues to be a dominant supplier of latex gloves because the country is a key player of raw latex material. From a business standpoint, it makes sense for medical examination gloves manufacturers to produce gloves in close proximity to raw materials to reduce costs.

Demand for latex exam gloves skyrocketed in the early 1990s, driven by an increased public awareness of HIV and the risks healthcare professionals faced.

For this reason, hospitals sought out quality latex medical exam gloves in increased numbers, which put pressure on the available supply. Soon after, many other professionals like dentists, rescue workers, and police officers began wearing latex gloves adding to the growing demand. Production capabilities expanded in Malaysia and other countries to meet this demand.

At this time, latex exam gloves had minimal regulation. Pinholes, rips, and other imperfections were not uncommon.

To make matters worse, people started to complain about having sensitivity to the latex gloves and showing symptoms of allergic reactions. Looking at the manufacturing process of latex gloves, it is not surprising many gloves were causing issues because of certain steps in the process of making latex gloves.

Since changing these steps was expensive, many factories minimized their costs by shortening or ignoring them. Over time, the FDA began regulating the quality of exam gloves produced, forcing factories to conform to set standards. Today, all medical-grade exam gloves must pass through a series of tests in order to be sold in the U.S. market.

Latex Medical Examination Gloves: Manufacturing Process

Today, the process for manufacturing gloves is a simple process. Latex is made from the sap of rubber trees called *Hevea Brasiliensis* (Brazilian Rubber).

Latex rubber has a milky white appearance and is made of various lipids, phospholipids, and proteins. It's the proteins that cause allergic reactions to those sensitive to latex. Although the raw material harvested is latex, to make latex into a favorable medical glove material, it must be formulated with chemical compounds. This ensures the final exam glove product has increased tensile strength and flexibility. This formulation plays a major role in determining the quality of the medical glove produced.

To make latex into an examination glove form, molds called "formers" are used. These formers determine the texture and size of the glove. The formers pass through a production line where they are dipped into the latex liquid formulation.



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The speed of the line will determine the thickness (measured in mil) of the glove which is correlated to the strength.

After the forming process is complete, the harsh chemicals are removed through a vulcanization and leaching process. It is during the leaching phase where protein is minimized. Once the medical gloves pass through these stages, they are washed and dried before they are inspected for testing.

The hazards of latex protein were not secret. In fact, the removal of the hazardous protein is one of the steps when creating latex medical gloves. This process is called leaching which removes water-soluble chemicals and latex protein from the gloves. Unfortunately, this process does not remove all the protein found in latex gloves.

Latex Medical Examination Gloves: Allergies

“Our facility needs to become latex-free!”

How many times have you heard someone make this statement?

Latex-free has become the new trend in the healthcare industry and every day, more and more hospitals are jumping on the bandwagon for one reason – to prevent latex allergies. The healthcare industry is pushing for a latex-free environment to minimize workers from developing latex related allergies including irritant contact dermatitis and allergic contact dermatitis.

Symptoms range from skin redness to respiratory symptoms and, in rare cases, shock. As individuals are exposed to latex frequently, they can develop sensitivity and eventually become allergic.

With improved technologies, latex-free gloves have become just as effective, if not more, as latex gloves as a barrier of protection. One of the most important characteristics of vinyl exam gloves is the latex-free claim. Six percent of the general population has latex allergy and as many as 17 percent of health care workers are reported to be affected.

Replacing Latex gloves with Vinyl and Nitrile gloves helps make the clinical environment safer for staff and patients with latex allergies without sacrificing the quality of gloves. We at Medical Examination Gloves are prepared to alleviate this problem and help our customers by providing other cost effective alternatives.