

JAN

Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

Accommodation and Compliance Series

Accommodation and Compliance Series: Latex Allergy

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ODEP

Office of Disability
Employment Policy

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Preface

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is funded by a grant from the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. JAN makes documents available with the understanding that the information be used solely for educational purposes. The information is not intended to be legal or medical advice. If legal or medical advice is needed, appropriate legal or medical services should be contacted.

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JAN'S Accommodation and Compliance Series

Introduction

JAN's Accommodation and Compliance Series is designed to help employers determine effective accommodations and comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each publication in the series addresses a specific medical condition and provides information about the condition, ADA information, accommodation ideas, and resources for additional information.

The Accommodation and Compliance Series is a starting point in the accommodation process and may not address every situation. Accommodations should be made on a case by case basis, considering each employee's individual limitations and accommodation needs. Employers are encouraged to contact JAN to discuss specific situations in more detail.

For information on assistive technology and other accommodation ideas, visit JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR) at <https://AskJAN.org/soar>.

Information about Latex Allergy

Latex allergy is a reaction to proteins present in latex derived from natural rubber latex (NRL), which is created from a variety of plants, but mainly the rubber tree, *hevea brasiliensis*). Latex allergy can result from repeated exposures to proteins in NRL through skin contact or inhalation. Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure to latex, but they can occur hours later and can produce various symptoms. These include skin rash and inflammation, respiratory irritation, asthma, and in rare cases shock. In some instances, sensitized employees have experienced reactions so severe that they impeded the worker's ability to continue working in specific jobs.

People at increased risk for developing latex allergy include workers with ongoing latex exposure, persons with a tendency to have multiple allergic conditions, and persons with spina bifida. Latex allergy is also associated with allergies to certain foods such as avocados, potatoes, bananas, tomatoes, chestnuts, kiwi fruit, and papaya. Workers who use gloves less frequently, such as law enforcement personnel, ambulance attendants, fire fighters, food service employees, painters, gardeners, housekeeping personnel outside the health-care industry, and funeral home employees, also may develop latex allergy. Workers in factories where NRL products are manufactured or used also may be affected.

Latex Allergy and the Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA does not contain a definitive list of medical conditions that constitute disabilities. Instead, the ADA defines a person with a disability as someone who (1) has

a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more "major life activities," (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. For more information about how to determine whether a person has a disability under the ADA, see [How to Determine Whether a Person Has a Disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act \(ADAAA\)](#).

Accommodating Employees with Latex Allergy

People with latex allergies may develop some of the limitations discussed below, but seldom develop all of them. Also, the degree of limitation will vary among individuals. Be aware that not all people with latex allergies will need accommodations to perform their jobs and many others may only need a few accommodations. The following is only a sample of the possibilities available, and numerous other accommodation solutions may exist:

- Discontinue the use of latex gloves. Purchase alternative glove products such as vinyl or nitrile. The feasibility of using alternatives will likely depend upon the infection control needed to perform job tasks.
- If latex gloves must be used, switch to non-powdered latex with reduced protein content. Provide all employees within the individual's working environment with non-powdered gloves as well. If other employees continue to wear powdered latex gloves, the latex proteins can become airborne and create the potential for an allergic reaction.
- If powdered latex gloves are used, thoroughly clean the environment to remove powder residue from walls, equipment and HVAC vents.
- Implement a latex-safe department, clinic or facility. Eliminate the use of latex gloves and, when possible, switch to non-latex medical supplies. If the entire facility cannot be latex-safe, safeguard specific locations by creating latex-safe zones.
- Place the individual in the least latex-intensive environment possible.
- If the individual cannot be accommodated in the original position because of the need to eliminate exposure to latex, investigate reassignment as an accommodation. When possible, place the individual in a position that continues to take advantage of the employee's clinical or technical skills. For example, if a nurse can no longer perform duties involving direct patient care, consider positions that still require nursing skills. Opportunities may exist in case management, occupational health nursing, health hotlines, poison control, the insurance industry, medical mal-practice or teaching.

Questions to Consider:

1. What limitations is the employee experiencing?
2. How do these limitations affect the employee and the employee's job performance?
3. What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these limitations?

4. What accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems? Are all possible resources being used to determine possible accommodations?
5. Once accommodations are in place, would it be useful to meet with the employee to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed?
6. Do supervisory personnel and employees need training?

Accommodation Ideas:

Limitations

Dizziness

- Fall Protection
- Flexible Schedule
- Modified Break Schedule
- Padded Edging
- Personal Safety and Fall Alert Devices
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Headache

- Air Cleaners & Purifiers
- Cubicle Doors, Shields, and Shades
- Flexible Schedule
- Job Restructuring
- Marginal Functions
- Modified Break Schedule
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Nausea

- Flexible Schedule
- Mini Refrigerators/ Electric Coolers
- Odor Control
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Respiratory Distress/Breathing Problem

- Air Cleaners & Purifiers

- Air Cleaners - Chemical/Odor Removal
- Air Cleaning Systems
- Air Purifiers for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
- Alternative Cleaning Supplies
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Device
- Carpet Alternatives, Sealants, and Sustainable Flooring
- Escape Hoods
- Flexible Schedule
- Floor Cleaning/Stripping Products - Chemical Sensitivity
- Low/No Odor Paints and Stains
- Mask Brackets and Frames
- Masks - Respirator
- Masks – General/Chemical/Allergen
- Odor Control
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Personal Air Cleaner (Neckworn)
- Personal On-Site Paging Devices
- Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR)
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely
- Voice Amplification

Skin Rash/Blisters/Sores

- Alternative Cleaning Supplies
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Device
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette Training
- Job Restructuring
- Odor Control
- Outgoing Voice Amplification - Telephone
- Policy Modification
- Touchless Faucets
- Voice Amplification

Work-Related Functions

Air Quality/Irritants

- Air Cleaners & Purifiers
- Air Cleaners - Chemical/Odor Removal
- Air Cleaning Systems
- Air Purifiers for Multiple Chemical Sensitivity
- Flexible Schedule
- Masks – General/Chemical/Allergen
- Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR)
- Masks - Respirator
- Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Situations and Solutions:

The following situations and solutions are real-life examples of accommodations that were made by JAN customers. Because accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, these examples may not be effective for every workplace but give you an idea about the types of accommodations that are possible.

An office worker with latex allergy had to take rubber bands off bundles of papers and was having a reaction to the latex in the bands.

The employer switched to non-latex bands.

A registered nurse with latex allergies was having difficulty wearing latex gloves.

The employer provided her with non-latex gloves and started using non-powdered latex gloves for other staff to reduce the amount of latex in the environment.

A nurse aide with latex allergy was reassigned to an area of the hospital where few latex products were used, but the aide was still having problems with latex exposure.

The employer realized that the latex was being carried through the ventilation system so the employer worked with a heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) specialist to prevent the circulation of latex in the employee's work area.

An emergency room nurse with a latex allergy needed reassigned.

She was reassigned to a nurse-consultant job that did not involve direct patient care or direct contact with latex products.

A chef could no longer wear latex gloves due to an allergy that developed from shingles on her arm.

He was accommodated with latex-free gloves.

Products

There are numerous products that can be used to accommodate people with limitations. JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource at <https://AskJAN.org/soar> is designed to let users explore various accommodation options. Many product vendor lists are accessible through this system; however, JAN provides these lists and many more that are not available on the Web site upon request. Contact JAN directly if you have specific accommodation situations, are looking for products, need vendor information, or are seeking a referral.

Resources

Job Accommodation Network

West Virginia University
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jan@askjan.org
<https://askjan.org>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the employability of people with disabilities.

Office of Disability Employment Policy

200 Constitution Avenue,
NW, Room S-1303
Washington, DC 20210
Toll Free: (866) 633-7365
odep@dol.gov
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Labor. ODEP provides national leadership to increase employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities while striving to eliminate barriers to employment.

American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology

555 East Wells Street
Suite 1100
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3823
Direct: (414) 272-6071
info@aaaai.org
<http://www.aaaai.org/home.aspx>

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology is dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge and practice of allergy, asthma and immunology for optimal patient care.

American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology

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Fax: (847) 427-1294
mail@acaai.org
<http://acaai.org/>

American Nurses Association

8515 Georgia Avenue
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Silver Spring, MD 20910
Toll Free: (800) 274-4262
Fax: (301) 628-5001
info@ana.org
<http://www.nursingworld.org/>

ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the economic and general welfare of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

8201 Corporate Drive
Suite 1000
Landover, MD 20785
Toll Free: (800) 727-8462
info@aafa.org
<http://www.aafa.org/>

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) is the premier patient organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma and allergies and their caregivers, through education, advocacy and research. AAFA, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1953, provides practical information, community based services, support and referrals through a national network of chapters and educational support groups. AAFA also sponsors research toward better treatments and a cure for asthma and allergic diseases.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, GA 30333
Toll Free: (800) 232-4636
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of people - at home and abroad, providing credible information to enhance health decisions, and promoting health through strong partnerships.

Envision Inc.

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education@envisioninc.net
<http://www.envisioninc.net>

Provides award-winning programs to meet the continuing education needs of physicians, nurses, general staff, patients and families.

MedlinePlus

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
custserv@nlm.nih.gov
<https://medlineplus.gov>

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's Web site for patients and their families and friends. Produced by the National Library of Medicine, the world's largest medical library, it brings you information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language you can understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, for free.

National Center for Biotechnology Information

8600 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20894
pubmedcentral@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health by providing access to biomedical and genomic information.

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) was established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is the only federal Institute responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illnesses and injuries.

National Jewish Health

1400 Jackson Street
Denver, CO 80206
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<http://www.nationaljewish.org/>

National Jewish Health is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked National Jewish Health as the number one or number two hospital in pulmonology on its Best Hospitals list ever since pulmonology was included in the rankings.

Occupational Safety & Health Administration

200 Constitution Avenue
NW
Washington, DC 20210
Toll Free: (800) 321-6742
<http://www.osha.gov>

The mission of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is to save lives, prevent injuries, and protect the health of America's workers. To accomplish this, federal and state governments must work in partnership with the more than 100 million working men and women and their six and a half million employers who are covered by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

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