WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY **Lab Safety**

Latex Allergy

The most common cause of latex allergy in laboratory workers is direct contact with latex, a natural substance used in making disposable gloves and other products. Some workers are sensitive to latex.
Reactions range from localized skin irritation to immediate, possibly life-threatening reactions.

Under OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens standard (29 CFR 1910.1030), the Principal Investigator (PI) must ensure that gloves and other appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) are accessible at your lab or issued to you. However, alternatives are available and must be readily accessible if you are allergic to latex-containing PPE. Glove liners or powder-free gloves can be used to reduce exposure or latex-free gloves can be used to eliminate exposure.

You may have a latex allergy if you develop symptoms after latex exposure, including:

- nasal, eye, or sinus irritation
- hives or rash
- difficulty breathing
- coughing, wheezing
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea

If you have any of these symptoms you should be evaluated by a physician as further exposure may cause a serious allergic reaction.

If you become allergic to latex, precautions must be taken to prevent further exposures. Some medications may reduce the allergic symptoms, but avoiding latex is safest.

Appropriate work practices can reduce the chance of reactions to latex. If you must wear latex gloves, oil-based hand creams or lotions (which can cause glove deterioration) should not be used unless they reduce latex-related problems and maintain glove barrier protection. After removing latex gloves, wash your hands with a mild soap and dry them thoroughly.