

know the DIFFERENCE

A guide to understanding your non-latex options



DOCTOR BOES TELLS OF HOW A CHEMICAL TYPE IV ALLERGY NEARLY ENDED HIS MEDICAL CAREER

Dr. Boes: 'Gloves are extremely important to all of medicine. They are an important barrier to prevent contamination between the patient and the surgeon or the patient and the healthcare practitioner.

There are two problems with wearing a glove for any one. If it's a latex glove there is a type one hypersensitivity reaction that can occur to the person wearing the glove or to anyone who is allergic to natural rubber. The second type of problem you could experience is if you are wearing a non-latex glove and that can occur in terms of having an allergic contact dermatitis due to the chemical accelerants that they use to make a non-latex glove to look, feel and perform like a regular natural rubber glove.'

FACT FILE	
SURGEON	Dr. David Boes
SPECIALISATION	Ophthalmologist Specialised in cataract surgery, glaucoma surgery and laser vision correction
HOSPITAL	Private practice
LOCATION	Great Falls, Montana, USA

Tell us about your chemical allergy.

Dr. Boes: 'By and large in the operating rooms and in most hospitals, they have done away with regular latex gloves. So probably at least up until 2008 and maybe at least the 5 or 10 years prior to that I was wearing a non-latex glove. From what I was aware of was the standard of care was a non-latex glove. That's what everybody wore and I just never imagined that there were other aspects of a non-latex glove that would be potentially so allergenic and so disabling to my hands. That just surprised me because I knew that issues associated with latex but I didn't know the issues associated with the chemicals involved in some non-latex gloves. In 2008, I developed a type four delayed hypersensitivity allergic reaction, I wasn't really sure what the cause of it was. I'd spent a lot of time in the O.R, so I just assumed it was time spent in a glove. My rash started here over the knuckles and it spread over to this dorsal area of both hands and then it just extended onto this portion of the wrist. My hands looked horrible with this contact dermatitis and you can imagine just having a swollen claw essentially and it looked really deformed because of the oedema in the hands, it looks like you have been scalded. I just called a friend of mine who is a dermatologist and he saw me over the weekend and he looked at my hands and said you have an allergic contact dermatitis and so he did the full complement of patch testing on my back and what that did was broke down all the potential chemicals that I'm allergic to. The dermatologist gave me a booklet and in this booklet there is a description of the composition of every glove that they make, for every



manufacturer and every glove. And at the time the only glove that was made that didn't have any of the chemicals that I was allergic was the GAMMEX non-latex glove and it's not just a non-latex, it's a non-chemical glove. Since 2008 I've only been using the GAMMEX non-latex, non-chemical glove.'

How did this allergic reaction impact you?

Dr. Boes: 'The rest of my practice went when my hands became inflamed, it got to the point that I didn't want to show them around. At the peak of the inflammation when I was getting it up on my chest, it made me feel like I had some auto-immune disease and I just felt really ill from this toxin and it made me quite concerned that I wasn't going to be able to do surgery anymore. I had heard horror stories from the nurses, they all knew a Surgeon who had to quit doing surgery because of a glove reaction. And I certainly didn't want to be that person. I didn't need to cut down on surgery, I was able to get through that aspect of it successfully. It's just by the end of the day my hands really hurt and as far as affecting the practice per se, it was primarily just a concern about whether I was going to keep being able to continue to do surgery and what the long-term game plan was going to be.'

What advice would you give surgical staff?

Dr. Boes: 'If you are experiencing any redness, irritation, itchiness at all after being in a glove, get into a non-latex glove, get into a non-chemical glove and what's worked for me has been the GAMMEX non-latex. I think it's really far more common than is recognised and I think the fact that I know 5 surgeons in the little town of Great Falls who have the same contact dermatitis from a non-latex glove that resolved when they went into the GAMMEX non-latex glove, non-chemical glove, I think that says a lot. You know the most important thing about the GAMMEX non-latex glove to me is that I am not allergic to it. Secondly, it's a great glove, it performs well and it feels good, no issues whatsoever, I don't think about the gloves which is what you want, it's almost like you've got another layer of skin on that's sterile and strong and protects me.'

