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Protocol for students who have sensitivity or allergy to natural rubber latex (NRL) |

**Purpose**

This Protocol is designed to assist the Faculty of Health Sciences in enabling students, with NRL sensitivity or

allergy, to graduate safely and successfully wherever possible. Our general approach is to eliminate use of

NRL wherever possible, substituting other less hazardous substances, or limiting exposure where it is

deemed necessary to use NRL products.

The *Health & Safety at Work Act* 1974 places a duty upon individuals to take reasonable care of their own health & safety and to co-operate with their employer in any measures put in place to manage health & safety. The employer is deemed as the practice provider whilst students are learning in practice and the university - for campus based learning. This Protocol informs students of the extent of our current measures and explains what they need to do to minimise risk.

**Principles**

**Minimising risk in the working environment**

1. Whilst every effort will be made to reduce and manage the risks to individuals from NRL exposure, it is not possible to obtain assurances from suppliers about the latex content of all equipment and supplies. The Faculty’s control measures are under constant review.
2. To assist in provision of a safe environment for both students and staff within the faculty only latex-free gloves are used within the clinical skills areas.
3. Where a NRL sensitivity or allergy is suspected the individual should be treated as positive whilst expert advice is sought.
4. Some skills sessions may involve exposure to NRL and this will be made known in advance of the session, to enable students to assess their individual risks. If a student feels that a session poses too great a risk they must contact the module lead to negotiate an alternative way of meeting the learning outcomes. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate this approach and engage with staff to agree any alternative activity.
5. All students must be aware that it may not be possible to provide a safe environment in which they can meet the NMC practice proficiencies for the programme. Should this situation arise, it would become necessary to withdraw from the programme.

**Disclosure and dissemination of information**

1. The importance of notifying the faculty and Occupational Health during their initial health clearance of any known or suspected NRL sensitivity/allergy is discussed with students as part of their induction. Students are then required to make a self-declaration at re-enrolment for each subsequent year regarding their NRL sensitivity/allergy status.
2. Students who declare a NRL sensitivity/allergy will be referred to Occupational Health (OH) for advice and recommendations regarding adjustments for campus based learning and practice placements. Any required adjustments will be shared with the Programme Lead and Faculty Lead for Inclusivity (FLI). The FLI will enter the student on the faculty ‘health adjustments and disability database’ and create a letter for practice. Where students have the potential for a serious allergic reaction the relevant Faculty Lead for Practice Liaison will be notified.
3. When students enrol on a programme of study at the beginning of each academic year of study they are notified that the university may need to share personal data with other parties as necessary. In order to complete the enrolment process they are required to consent to this happening by ticking agreement to the following message “*The University is required to report information about student disabilities. Where necessary this may be passed in confidence to academic and administrative staff and placement supervisors*.” By ticking this agreement they are consenting to information being shared and no further agreement is required.
4. Practice Experience Providers are notified in advance of any student with an NRL sensitivity/allergy being allocated to their practice area by the Placements Team via a letter. The requirement to notify other key staff supporting the student and undertake a risk assessment is made explicit within the letter sent out.

**Managing personal health status**

1. Students with NRL sensitivity/allergy have responsibilities in the management of their condition, and as well as that general obligation, students will also be informed, in this Protocol and elsewhere by practice experience providers, of steps that are deemed necessary to protect themselves, other colleagues, and/or service users with a known allergy to NRL.
2. Students are responsible for notifying Occupational Health and the faculty of their actual / suspected NRL sensitivity/allergy.
3. Whilst awaiting professional health advice which will allow them to determine their personal exposure

 risks, students should:

1. Assume they have a NRL allergy and avoid contact with NRL.
2. Risk assess and manage their personal engagement in any situation where there is a potential for exposure to NRL and co-operate with ‘employer’ measures to manage health and safety with respect to NRL
3. Recognise that some activities may need to be practiced in a way which avoids exposure to NRL. This strategy should be constructed in consultation with academic and/or practice staff.

12. Students with NRL sensitivity/allergy must:

1. Wear Medic Alert jewellery. The jewellery must allow correct hand washing so a bracelet is not appropriate. Necklaces should have a quick release catch to protect the student in the event of it being caught or pulled.
2. Make themselves and their risk status known to their Mentor or supervising staff member in any relevant situation.
3. Ensure that they keep their medicine, such as an Epipen, in an easily accessible place, out of sight, on their person and tell mentors where it is at the start of each shift.
4. Ensure that medication is in-date.
5. Ensure that they are confident and competent in self-administration.
6. Realise that whilst engaged in work experience placements they will also be subject to the Health and Safety policies and procedures of their placement provider. They must therefore make themselves aware of the placement provider’s Latex Policy and any associated and relevant Procedures and take all necessary actions to comply with the requirements and recommendations contained in these policies and procedures to the same extent as if they were an employee.
7. Should a student with a known NRL allergy/sensitivity experience a reaction to NRL they are responsible for the self-administration of their Epipen.
8. If the student is unable to administer or does not respond to their medication then the emergency/anaphylaxis protocol must be followed within a hospital setting. Outside of a hospital environment emergency help should be summoned by dialling 999.

**Reporting adverse events**

1. Should a student develop signs which may be attributed to an NRL sensitivity/allergy in the period before the first, or between subsequent annual self-declarations, they must inform their academic tutor, who will notify the Programme Lead and Faculty Lead for Inclusivity.
2. If the NRL sensitivity or allergic reaction arose as a work or university related incident or occurrence pursuant to their registered studies then the online *Incidents in Practice* Report Form must be completed by the Student, or the academic tutor. This can be accessed via the Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings website [www.soton.ac.uk/alps](http://www.soton.ac.uk/alps)
3. If a NRL related incident occurs in a practice setting the Protocols and Report forms of the Practice Experience Provider must also be followed (i.e. Dual Reporting). The relevant staff accident book or equivalent local form must be completed, clearly indicating that the individual involved is a student, in addition to the university *Incidents in Practice* form.

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| Protocol Status:  | Approved |
| Originated by:  | Michelle Cowen on behalf of Practice Learning Committee |
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Appendix 1 :

Student checklist: Personal management of a Latex sensitivity/allergy.

* Carry your Epipen at all times, preferably in your pocket.
* Inform/remind all members of staff at the start of each shift that you have an allergy.
* Wear your medic alert jewellery at all times.
* Make sure all staff know where your Epipen is (NB Staff are not allowed to administer your epipen, you need to be able to do so yourself)
* Check the box of gloves is latex free before you pick a pair of gloves (vinyl gloves are often the same colour as latex ones).
* Participate in a risk assessment prior to commencing each new placement. Ask if any items in the placement area contain latex and if these cannot be removed notify your Programme Lead immediately. DO NOT commence placement in the area until further discussions have taken place.
* Never take a pair of gloves off someone else if you haven’t personally seen them take them out of a latex free gloves box or they can verbally confirm they are latex free.
* Don’t be afraid to inform people of your allergy.
* Don’t open anything without checking it is latex free first; if in doubt take every precaution and consider all alternatives.

Don’t leave the responsibility to others, take responsibility for yourself