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[Home](#) > Balloons and Latex

Balloons and Latex

Posted by Anonymous on Tue, 2017-07-25 12:53

Balloons and Latex: I haven't heard of any issues but we have a parent who is concerned with regards to balloons and latex and the powder residue in them. We use balloons a lot and wondered if there is anything we can use or do?

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

Foundation

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Senior Secondary

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

Showing 1-1 of 1 Responses

Balloons

Submitted by sat on 15 September 2017

Answer reviewed 26 February 2023

Use of balloons in science – latex and powder allergies.

Your question regarding balloons has raised an important issue regarding the use of latex in schools in general. The last few decades have seen an increase in allergies to latex.¹ These allergic reactions develop in some people due to exposure to certain latex proteins and chemicals used in the manufacture of latex products.

In a school setting, items containing latex can be found across many departments and whilst frequent exposure is unlikely, latex allergies can be an issue for susceptible individuals. It is important to know which staff and students may be at risk, to know where latex products are used in schools and to have strategies in place to avoid or limit exposure especially when a person has been identified as having a latex allergy.

In science, we are not advocating to ban latex balloons, however it is important to be aware if there are any staff or students who have an allergy to latex and then take steps to avoid exposure to latex. Whilst it may be difficult to find a suitable alternative to latex balloons, it is quite achievable to substitute latex gloves with non-latex gloves or at the very least to purchase non-powdered gloves.

As a result of this question, we developed an information sheet *AIS: Latex allergies in schools* to raise awareness of latex allergies and to encourage a sensible and a risk management approach to the use of latex products in schools.

Disposal

Another aspect to consider is the disposal of balloons. The release of balloons into the environment threatens wildlife and is considered littering and illegal in some states.³

References

¹ Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA). (2010). *ASCIA Guidelines for Hospital Management of Latex Allergic Patients*. Retrieved from Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy: <https://www.allergy.org.au/?view=category&id=113>

² Science ASSIST. (2017). *AIS: Latex allergies in schools*, Retrieved from the Science ASSIST website, <https://assist.asta.edu.au/resource/4243/ais-latex-allergies-schools>

³ Sustainability Victoria. (2022, August 31). Wildlife-friendly alternatives to balloons, Retrieved from the State Government of Victoria sustainability website: <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/circular-economy-and-recycling/at-home/avoid-waste/minimise-single-use-items/balloons>

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