

# Gloves & Lotions

The Department of Occupational Health and Safety (OSHA) has recommended the use of gloves or other protective devices for health care providers who have direct contact or a reasonable likelihood for occupational exposure to blood or body fluids<sup>1</sup>. While wearing gloves to prevent transmission of infections is not a new idea, the concern over deterioration of latex gloves when exposed to certain kinds of ointments and lotions used in the healthcare setting is making some headlines. Education and proper selection of both components will help guide the user which products will serve the need.

## **Gloves:**

The two main types of gloves in use are latex and vinyl. While both types may serve to protect the wearer from contact with blood and body fluids, knowing a little about the basic differences between them may enable the clinician to choose which type is best suited for their practice.

Latex - Made from natural rubber, latex gloves offer easier movement & flexibility, and will reseal when tiny punctures occur.

Vinyl - A synthetic product (polyvinyl chloride), is not as flexible, cannot reseal and generally is not recommended for use in high-risk clinical situations.

Although gloves do provide a good barrier to protect the healthcare worker from exposure to potentially hazardous body fluids, this property may be compromised, particularly with latex gloves, if used in combination with certain products. It was at one time considered acceptable practice to use a sterile petrolatum ointment after surgical scrub prior to putting on surgical gloves as a method to alleviate dry skin. However, numerous recent publications promote a different stance. Studies indicate that petrolatum-based lotions or ointments, mineral oil, immersion in alcohol, ozone and temperature extremes may actually change the physical characteristics of the latex, including elasticity, tear resistance, and dimensional stability<sup>2</sup>. The user should therefore be aware of the ingredients of any lotion or ointment used in conjunction with their latex gloves.

**Read the Label!** Many commercially available lotions contain petrolatum or mineral oil.

This same data also recommends that in lieu of petrolatum-based products, a water-based lubricant DOES NOT affect the physical properties of latex. Water-based lotions provide relief to dry skin associated with repeated handwashing or scrubs without damaging the gloves.

**AloeSoothe®** is the perfect healthcare moisturizer!

- Does not contain petrolatum, alcohol or mineral oil...therefore it's latex friendly!
- Contains aloe to relieve dry, irritated skin.
- Water-based so it will not affect the integrity of latex gloves.

## References

1. Department of Health and Human Services (1991). Federal Register, 56(235), 64175-64182
2. AORN Journal: Questions on: Petroleum ointment and gloving. AORN 52;3:612, 1990