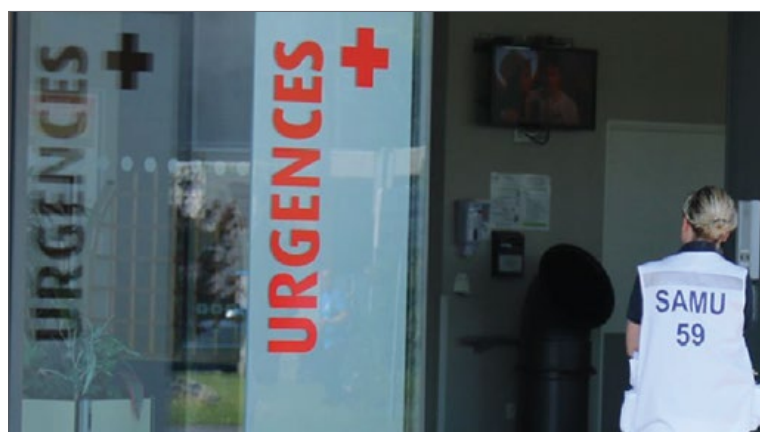


## HOW CENTRE HOSPITALIER VALENCIENNES CREATED A WORRY-FREE ENVIRONMENT FROM LATEX TYPE I ALLERGIES



Preventing such dramatic events bring a lot of stress and workload to the work floor. Switching to non-latex has created a worry-free work environment, where schedules can be developed 'first time right'.

**Caroline Nortier:** The real problem is for emergency patients. At Valenciennes, we have a major trauma unit, so we have patients with multiple fractures and traumas. We also do neurosurgery. We insert tubes and ventilate patients unaware of their allergies. Switching to non-latex relieves us of this stress. The use of sacrosanct scheduling in theatres is made easier. Everyone has encountered scheduling problems, with patients who forgot to report their allergy and had to be rescheduled or another theatre had to be found. And as you know, many people with an allergy to latex are not even aware of it. Allergy to strawberries, kiwis or seafood can be a warning sign. That no longer happens and allergic patients are cared for in the same non-latex environment as all other patients.

### FACT FILE

NAME	Caroline Nortier
ROLE	Theatre Nurse
HOSPITAL	Centre Hospitalier
LOCATION	Valenciennes, France
OPERATING ROOMS	14

*An anaphylactic event during a caesarean in the maternity unit of centre hospitalier valenciennes made the hospital re-think their approach to all latex materials. A work group involving anaesthetics, surgeons, pharmacist, theatre nurses and occupational health doctors prepared a smooth exit of latex. With their latex gloves gone, also a lot of stress and many skin problems disappeared from the hospital's surgical units.*

*As a theatre nurse Nortier was witness of what happened at the maternity unit, and was later an active member of the project team that made the transition from latex to non-latex.*

**Caroline Nortier:** The Centre Hospitalier has a level 3 maternity unit, so we had to manage three caesarians at the same time. And the second patient had an allergy to latex and was an extreme emergency. There was a bit of panic and indecisiveness but all went well for the patient.



I've been a theatre nurse for 16 years

**Patient safety is their prime objective. Nevertheless, the healthcare workers themselves also enjoy health benefits from switching to 100% non-latex.**

**Caroline Nortier:** The nursing staff experienced a lot of skin problems. With washing, scrubbing up, intensive use of alcohol-based solutions, our hands were already vulnerable, especially in our cold northern winters. Add to that various problems of allergy to the latex in the gloves. Synthetic gloves improve our comfort and well-being. They are latex-free, powder-free and DPG-free\*, all of which would cause contact dermatitis.

**Also from a logistical point of view the lives of the healthcare workers has been made a lot easier.**

**Caroline Nortier:** Staff who are allergic no longer have to manage their own stock. When there is an unexpected change of theatre – a frequent occurrence – you're not worrying whether the right gloves are there. So, the gloves are the same in all the theatres and most skin problems are now in the past. Staff no longer need to worry about this problem and can focus on our patient's well-being. In terms of the pharmacy and logistics, it reduces the number of deliveries to one a week; there are fewer items to manage.



**It is clear that the new latex-free surgical environment brings nothing but advantages. But making this transition cannot be done overnight. So, how did the staff at Centre Hospitalier in Valenciennes go about implementing this successful change?**

**Caroline Nortier:** It was mainly the anaesthetics who initiated this project, following the anaphylactic shock in maternity. The pharmacy analysed all the medical systems in the unit. Over 30 items contained latex; surgical gloves, urinary catheters, some drains and plasters. The success of this change is an inspiration for projects throughout our hospital. It's the result of a joint effort involving anaesthetics, surgeons, pharmacists, theatre nurses and occupational doctors. The initiative was rolled-out to all departments. All gloves, sterile or non-sterile, are now non-latex. They are part of what we do now. We have to develop, and this is part of the natural evolution in our equipment and our profession.

**Watch the video of Centre Hospitalier Valenciennne's story. [Click here.](#)**

**Footnote:**

\* Despite the use of non-latex surgical gloves, Type IV allergies and sensitivities causing skin-related reactions are on the rise. These may be caused by DPG (diphenylguanidine) or other chemical accelerators used in the manufacture of some non-latex gloves. This was the case for a Swedish hospital where 13% of surgical nurses displayed reactions to DPG after moving to non-latex gloves.<sup>1, 2</sup>

[ansell.com/nonlatex](https://ansell.com/nonlatex)

**References:**

1. Kjellen MB. 2010. Handeksem av latexfria handskar (Hand eczema from latex-free gloves). Uppdukat. 2:30-31.
2. Rose RF, Lyons P, Horne H, Wilkinson SM. 2009. A review of the materials and allergens in protective gloves. Contact Dermatitis. 61:129-137.