

Glove Material Type Breakdown

Vinyl Gloves

Vinyl gloves are often used in the food industry and other industries where the spread of germs and overall cleanliness are a concern.

- Often less expensive than alternatives
- Latex-free
- Great for use at low risk jobs and short-term tasks
- An economical option
- Best used with non-hazardous materials
- Lightly powdered
- Anti-static properties

Latex Gloves

Made of rubber, latex gloves are popular among individuals working in the medical industry. Latex is known for more flexibility and comfort than nitrile gloves but can cause an allergic reaction for anyone with sensitive skin or an allergy to the material.

- Sensitivity to touch
- Fits the hand comfortably and snugly
- They are great for high-risk tasks involving pollutants
- Cost efficient
- Lightly powdered to make putting them on and taking them off easier
- Biodegradable
- Strong yet high in elasticity

Nitrile Gloves

Made of synthetic rubber, nitrile gloves are an ideal alternative for anyone who suffers from latex allergies or sensitive skin.

- Latex-free

- 3-5x higher puncture resistance than latex and vinyl gloves
- Forms to your hand as body heat penetrates the material
- Great for high-risk situations involving pollutants
- Chemical resistant
- Long-lasting
- Textured surface for firmer grip
- Available in blue and black to recognize possible punctures or tears
- Powder-free and still easy to put on and remove

Comparison Chart

GLOVE TYPE	DEFINITION	ADVANTAGE	PROTECTION LEVEL
Latex Gloves	Made of natural rubber	Highest comfort, flexibility, fit and tactile sensitivity	Bacteria, viruses
Nitrile Gloves	Made of synthetic material	Stretchy, durable	Chemicals, viruses
Vinyl Gloves	Made of synthetic material, sometimes referred to as synthetic	Cost-efficient synthetic option, comfortable	Chemicals

Options Chart

GLOVE OPTION	EXPLANATION	ADVANTAGE
Powdered Gloves	Gloves that are powdered, often with cornstarch	Enhanced ease of donning due to powder
Powder-free Gloves	Gloves that have had powder coating removed	Reduced allergic reaction, cleaner to use

Chlorinated Gloves	Powder-free gloves treated with chlorine	Easy donning, particle-free to prevent allergic reactions
Non-chlorinated Gloves	Powder-free gloves with a coating of gel/silicone particles	Neutral color, odor-free, longer shelf life
Examination Gloves	Sterile or non-sterile medical grade gloves	Provides protection against blood or bodily fluid exposure
Surgical Gloves	Usually sterile, high quality medical grade gloves	Provides high-quality protection against blood or bodily fluid exposure
Chemo Gloves	Gloves that are tested and approved for use with chemotherapy drugs	Provides protection against chemotherapy drug exposure
Gloves with Aloe	Gloves with a coating of organic aloe	Moisturizes hands during use
Gloves with Oatmeal	Gloves with colloidal oatmeal	Prevents and protects dry skin

Powdered Gloves vs. Powder-free Gloves

Powder-free gloves can be more expensive due to the process that needs to be done to remove the powder coating from the glove. However, gloves that are powder-free reduce the cause of allergies by lowering protein and chemical content. In addition, powder-free gloves are ‘cleaner’ to use than powdered gloves, since they don’t leave any residue on clothing or other surfaces.

Powdered gloves are usually lubricated with cornstarch, which makes them much easier to put on. Cornstarch coatings have replaced other powdering options such as lycopodium powder and talc because these other coating types have been found to irritate tissue. Nevertheless, even cornstarch can impede healing when coming into contact with tissues, so powder-free gloves are often preferred for surgeries and other sensitive procedures.

Chlorinated Gloves vs. Non-chlorinated Gloves

If you choose to use gloves that are powder-free, you'll need to decide if you want to use chlorinated or non-chlorinated gloves.

For those who don't want to use powdered gloves but want the advantages that come with that type of glove, chlorinated gloves are powder-free gloves that are treated with chlorine to make them easy to put on. These gloves are also particle free to avoid allergic reactions caused by soluble proteins. Chlorinated gloves are more commonly used than non-chlorinated gloves, although some prefer gloves that have a more neutral color and less of an odor. Another disadvantage of chlorinated gloves is their shorter shelf life: after about a year, chlorinated gloves become brittle, and when exposed to heat, these gloves may last even less than a year.

Non-chlorinated gloves, on the other hand, are closer in color to regular exam gloves and contain no chlorine odor. However, these gloves are not very popular since they are hard to put on, and are not particle free, since a 'gel coat' of tiny gel/silicone particles is added to make them slightly easier to don.

Examination Gloves vs. Surgical Gloves

Both surgical and exam gloves are medical-grade gloves for use during medical procedures.

Medical exam gloves can be used for patient examinations and blood tests. These gloves are also used as general-purpose gloves for managing incontinence, everyday spills and messes in and around the home. Surgical gloves are used by surgeons and operating room nurses. These disposable gloves must meet higher quality standards and are usually sterile since they are used for surgical procedures. Surgical gloves offer better fit with more precise sizing, as well as higher tactile sensitivity.

Other Options

Chemo gloves are medical gloves that have been tested for use with chemotherapy drugs. When selecting chemo tested gloves, care must be taken to ensure that the gloves have been tested for the specific drugs being used.

Some options that care for the caregiver include gloves with aloe or oatmeal. Gloves with a heat-activated aloe coating soothe and moisturize hands during use. Hardworking hands can also benefit from the extra care provided by gloves that contain colloidal oatmeal skin protectants, which helps maintain the skin's moisture barrier, thereby preventing and protecting dry skin.

In addition to the options listed above, there are other considerations when buying gloves. For example, different gloves are made with different finishes. Some gloves have a smooth finish, while others are partially or fully textured to provide better grip. Another consideration is the type of cuff the glove has. Most gloves are beaded for easier removal, and some gloves have an extended cuff for better coverage and protection.