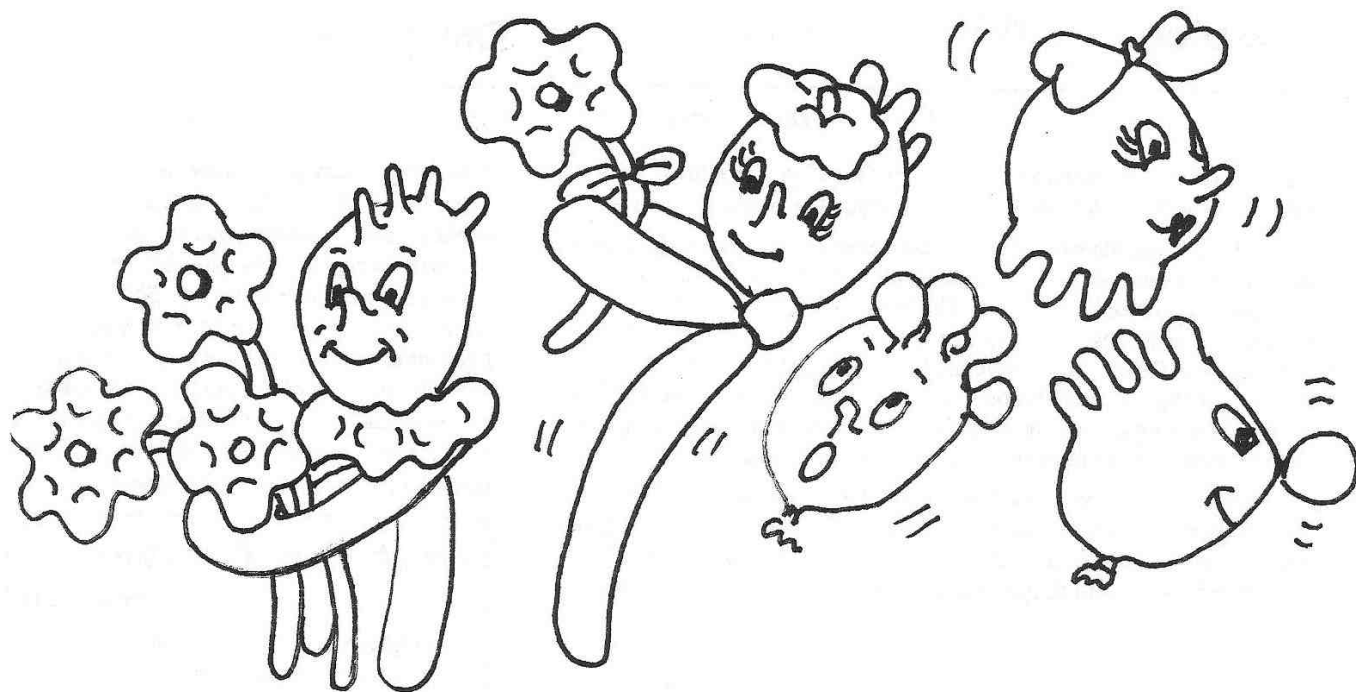


On Balloon Flowers and Gloves



2010 Note: In 1995 when this article was written, we caring clowns were still allowed to use latex balloons in the hospital rooms. Today, my hospital is latex free (except in the operating room). Please see the note on the next page.

IT STARTED ONE CHRISTMAS. The warning sign on the Respiratory Care Unit doors said “no live flowers.” I had a bag full of “Geo Blossom” balloons and made flowers for everyone. From that time on, I use them constantly in hospitals and nursing homes. When I started clowning in Intensive Care I was asked by a patient if I had anything that I could give her that would act as a reminder (of the clown and humor). A sticker didn’t seem appropriate. So after I received approval from the staff, I started using them in ICU (where live flowers are also not allowed).

So they can be easily moved, I slide them into the wires that hang under the TV. The Geos blow up magically fast with a hand pump, last several days and do not break easily (I have never had a geo blossom break. EVER!) The 260s which I use for the stem is another story. I say a special mantra when blowing those up in ICU. (I think any small prayer will work). I am very disciplined about keeping my balloons in the refrigerator when not in the hospital. On hot days I take an ice pack. (Suggested by T. Meyers)⁶

Balloons are not allowed in the pediatric floors of all the hospitals in which I have work. Apparently a case did occur where there were so many balloons in a child’s room that they obscured the view of vital information displayed on the computerized IV stand in a critical case.

A PARAMEDIC first made me aware of this marvelous little balloon -a latex hospital glove. With a child in an ambulance on route to the hospital, he had put masking tape across the ambulance and played volley ball. The child arrived at the hospital with a smile.

I added a funny face with a permanent marker and began finding many uses for this versatile “balloon.” I blow them up, give them a twist and use a helium balloon clip to secure them. These clips are available at any store that sells helium balloons. The gloves are very difficult to tie by themselves.

The “glove” is great for entertaining kids in lobbies and clinics who are restlessly waiting for parents and relatives. The gloves are soft and won’t break anything and I’ve never heard of any child swallowing them. And its amazing how spirits are lifted by seeing children at play.

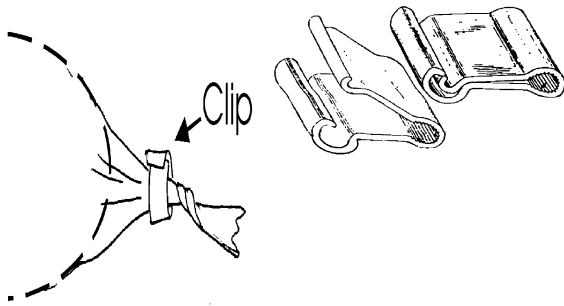
I’ve even had a patient in ICU play catch with them. Attach one end of a 6-foot piece of hospital cloth tape to the blown up glove, the other end near the patient. When the glove falls out of reach they can pull it in.

The gloves also work well as a head on a balloon sculpture. The days I work at the hospital I put a balloon sculpture on the information desk to let people know the clown is in residence! You can come up with all sorts of combinations as illustrated on this page. A 360 is good for the body, but a couple of 260’s will do. Before inflating the glove, blow up some small water balloons in the fingers. If you need help, send me a stamped envelope for more detailed instructions.

-- Shobi Dobi

The Versatile Exam Glove

Klip'N Seal™ Helium clips



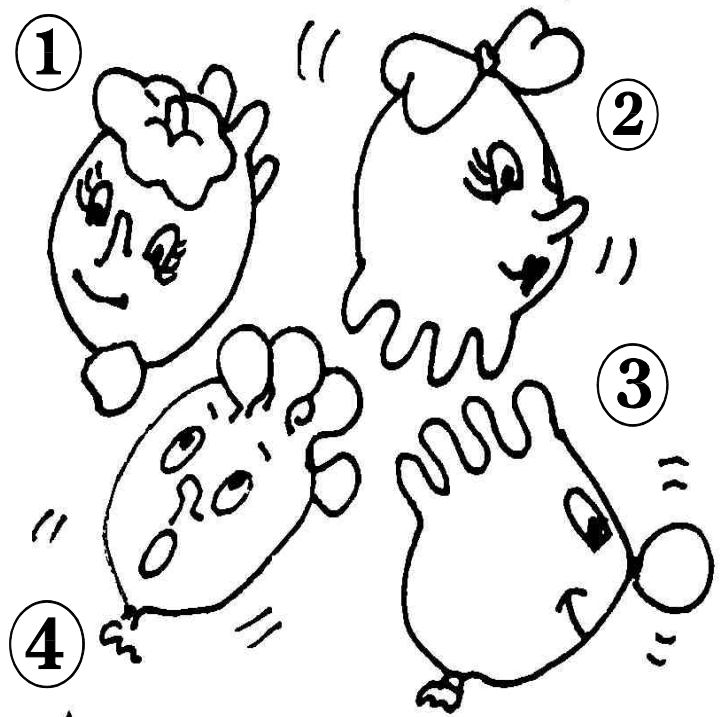
[2010 note:] Most hospitals do not use latex except in the operating room. The new Nitrile (non-latex) gloves are very hard to blow up and almost impossible to tie like a 260 balloon. The clips work, but they are a swallowing danger for small children. I also use pony tail (small) rubber bands instead of the clips.

The Clips are the ones used for helium balloons. They come in small, medium, and large. Medium are best. Twisty ties, like the ones that come on vegetables, can also be used.

Fold over one half an inch of glove over a “circle” made with your thumb and fore finger. Press this to your lips and blow up the glove. It takes a while, but can be amusing if your timing is syncopated and you get your eyes in the act!

Give the end you're are holding a twist and clip the twist. Draw faces on the glove with a Sharpie pen (nonpermanent markers will come off on the kids hands) Here are some variations:

- 1) Put a Geo balloon one of the fingers. Pull the finger up through geo hole and tie it to the next finger. Or put something like a small ball (crum-



pled up a piece of paper) into the finger before blowing it up and then clip it (a small clip) to hold geo in place.

- 2) Use two heart balloons tied together as a bow on top of head or as a bow tie.
- 3) Blow up little balloons in the thumb for a red nose. Clip with a small helium clip before blowing up glove.
- 4) Blown up different colored balloons in the fingers for a wild hair do.

I use a “Sharpie” marker to draw a silly face on the glove. . . . and you can use an uninflated 260 balloons attached to the clipped end for a bouncing toy. Or tie a piece of elastic string.