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## Asthma in the Workplace

Learn how to manage work-related asthma.

## 5 Ways to Avoid Contracting the Flu

Flu season is coming. Learn how to limit your chances of getting sick.



A monthly safety newsletter from

# Asthma in the Workplace

If you are experiencing difficulty breathing, tightness in the chest, coughing and wheezing in the workplace, there's a chance that you may have work-related asthma. If contributors to asthma in the workplace aren't addressed, they can negatively impact your overall quality of life and your ability to work.

Work-related asthma can occur in a number of different industries and typically falls under one of two categories:

1. **Occupational asthma:** Asthma that is caused by specific substances in the workplace. For instance, a worker in a cigarette factory may develop occupational asthma from tobacco dust.
2. **Work-exacerbated asthma:** Pre-existing asthma that is worsened by nonspecific factors, like cold temperatures, excessive exertion, dusts or fumes.

Agents that cause both occupational and work-exacerbated asthma can be hard to pinpoint and can range from chemicals and fungi to dust mites and fumes. However, there are a number of preventive measures you can take to help ease

the effects of asthma in the workplace:

- **Pinpoint the agents** in your workplace that are aggravating your asthma and talk to your manager in order to eliminate them, if possible.
- **Attend training courses** on work-related asthma.
- **Be aware of asthma symptoms** and consult a doctor to address them.
- **Wear personal protective equipment (PPE)**, such as respirators, when it is provided.
- **Report any problems** with PPE or ventilation equipment.
- **Work with your manager** to limit the amount of time you are exposed to agents that are causing asthma flare-ups.

In some cases, work-related asthma that goes untreated can result in disability and job loss. Work with your doctor and your supervisor to find a solution that works best for you.

**Work-related asthma has become the most common occupational respiratory disease in several countries around the world.**



**BALDWIN**  
KRISTYN SHERMAN

## 5 Ways to Avoid Contracting the Flu

Although flu season traditionally peaks in winter, it can start as early as October and put employees out of work for an extended period of time.

The flu is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by the influenza virus. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, loss of appetite and a runny or stuffy nose.

The flu is quite common and most people recover in about a week; however, it can severely limit your body's ability to ward off infection. This is especially concerning for those with underlying medical conditions, as the flu can lead to more serious health complications or even death.

To help limit your chances of getting or spreading the flu, consider the following tips:

1. **Get a flu shot:** Health officials recommend annual flu vaccinations for everyone who is at least 6 months old. Considered the most effective way to fight the flu, vaccinations prevent people from getting sick and spreading the virus to others.

2. **Wash your hands:** This will limit your chances of contracting or spreading the virus.
3. **Eat healthy foods:** Foods rich in vitamins, like leafy green vegetables, strawberries, oranges and almonds can help boost your immune system.
4. **Stay home:** If you become sick, staying home and resting will help you recover sooner. It will also prevent you from spreading the flu to others.
5. **Be mindful of where you cough:** By coughing and sneezing into your arm instead of your hand, you can limit your chances of spreading your germs to others.

By following these simple precautions, you could make it through the upcoming flu season without getting sick. However, if you do catch the flu, see a doctor to discuss treatment options.



### Safety in NUMBERS 12<sup>3</sup>

In the United States, the flu is responsible for about  
**31 million outpatient visits and 200,000 hospitalizations each year.**

The flu can affect anyone at any time, including those who are perfectly healthy.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### Real-life Case Study

James, a lifelong asthma sufferer, recently got a new job as the floor manager of a local auto body shop. As part of his responsibilities, James was tasked with overseeing workers on the floor and supervising new projects in a very hands-on fashion.

As James spent more and more time working closely with the various resins, glues and chemicals associated with the body work, he found that he was having trouble breathing. Despite the use of an inhaler, his problems persisted and James eventually sought help from his doctor.

James' doctor instructed him to talk with his supervisor about limiting the amount of time he was exposed to the specific irritants that were causing his asthma flare-ups. In addition to limiting his exposure to the irritants, James now wears PPE if he knows he will be in close proximity to the irritants for an extended period of time.

Now, James can make it through the day without the use of an inhaler.