



A monthly safety newsletter from

Managing 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-aggravated asthma can be hard to pinpoint and can range from chemicals and fungi to dust mites and fumes.

As an employee at , your health is our primary concern. If you are experiencing difficulty with your asthma at work, notify your supervisor, and heed the following advice:

- **Pinpoint** what agents in the workplace are aggravating your asthma and talk to your manager in order to eliminate them, if possible.
- **Attend** training courses on work-related asthma, if possible.
- **Be aware of asthma** symptoms and consult with your GP to address them.
- **Wear** personal protective equipment (PPE) such as respirators when they are 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 GP and your supervisor to find a solution that works best for you.

There are 5.4 million people living with asthma in the United Kingdom, and an average of three people die from the disease each day.



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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—with symptoms including 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 jab.** Health officials recommend that everyone older than 6 months gets a flu vaccine each year. 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 faster. Additionally, it will prevent you from spreading the flu to others.
5. **Be mindful of where you cough.** By coughing and sneezing into your arm and not your hand, you are limiting 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. Remember that good flu prevention involves leading a healthy life, which includes getting enough sleep and eating well.

However, if you do catch the flu, see your GP to discuss treatment options.



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The number of estimated deaths attributed to seasonal flu varies between 10,000 and 20,000 each year.

Source: Department of Health

Real-life Case Study

James, a lifelong asthma sufferer, recently got a new job as the floor manager of a local garage. As part of his new responsibilities, Jim is 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 a GP.

The GP instructed him to talk to 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.

