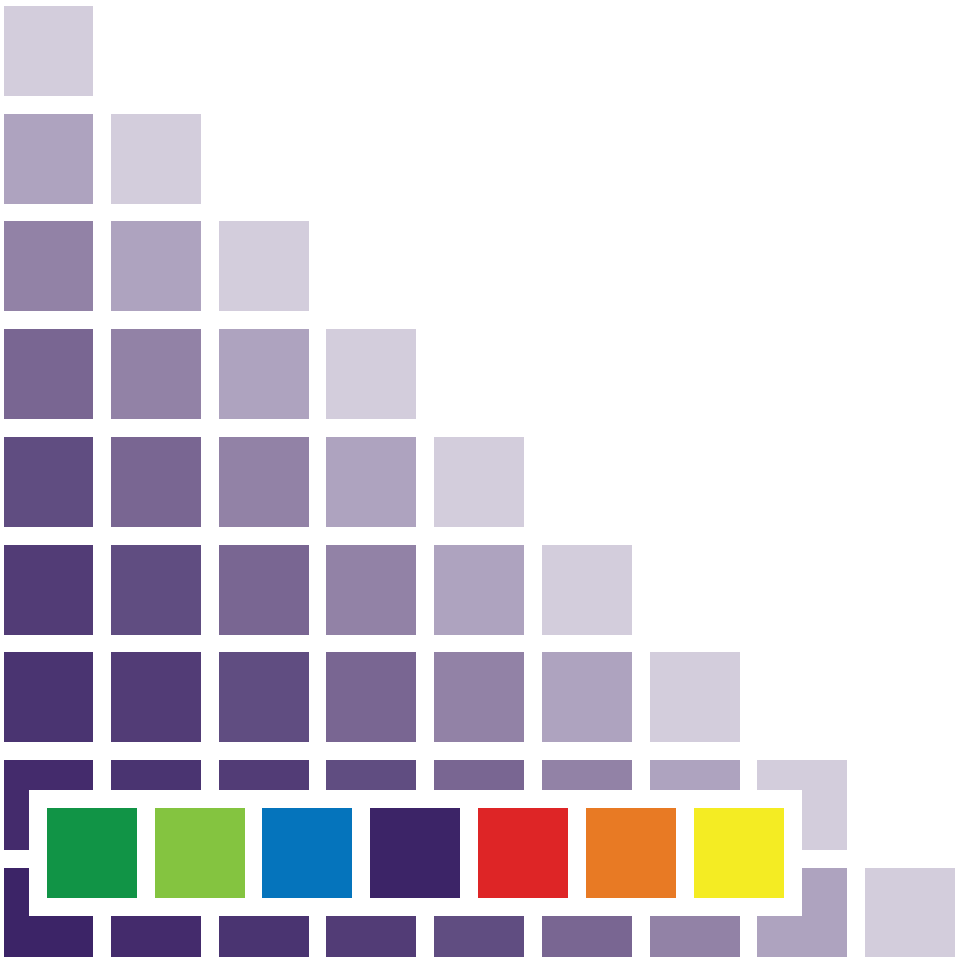


Your occupational asthma



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Finding out that you have occupational asthma can make you feel worried about your health and ability to continue working. We hope that this leaflet will help to address some of your concerns. It does not replace the information and advice we give you in person. Please ask if you have any questions.

What is occupational asthma?

Occupational asthma can be described as adult asthma caused by factors at work. It is usually caused by being in contact with something you are allergic to at work over a period of time.

The cause of an allergy is known as the allergen. If contact with the allergen is not stopped, it can lead to serious and ongoing asthma.

Common allergens include:

- flour
- bakery enzymes
- detergent enzymes
- isocyanates (found in industrial paints)
- solder fumes (colophony)
- hairdresser bleach (persulphate)
- potassium salts

How does occupational asthma develop?

It is important to note that occupational asthma is different from *work exacerbated* or *work aggravated* asthma. This is when someone already has asthma and finds that it is getting worse at work - usually where there is dust, fumes, a very cold workplace or where the work is physically demanding.

It is not known why some people develop an allergy to a substance at work and others do not. The allergy usually develops within a couple of years of starting work, but it can take longer. The immune system builds up an allergic response and a “memory” to the allergen. Once the allergic response has developed, you will generally get asthma symptoms if you come into contact with the allergen. These include shortness of breath, chest tightness, coughing or wheezing. Many people also have sneezing, a runny nose or itchy eyes.

How do you test for an allergy?

In many cases, people with occupational asthma have developed antibodies to the allergen. Antibodies are cells produced by the body when it finds foreign material such as allergens inside the body. They are not harmful but show that you have an allergy. We can check for these antibodies using a simple blood or skin test.

What happens after I have been diagnosed?

Your doctor will discuss the diagnosis with you and how it will affect your health in the future. You will probably be advised not to work with the allergen in the long term. Sometimes it can be suitable to continue your work over the short term while you are making longer term plans. However, you should wear the right kind of protection such as a face mask or gloves.

We know that this may be a difficult time for you and are happy to help where we can. In most cases there is no hurry to make a decision about your work. We can give you as much time as you want.

Will I always have occupational asthma?

You will always have the allergy that causes your occupational asthma. However, most people who keep away from the allergen recover very well. Recovery can happen as soon as contact with the allergen stops, but it may take longer. This is usually the case when you have had occupational asthma for a while and so have more serious asthma symptoms.

If your symptoms are serious and you have had them for some time, they may not go away completely.

How soon should I stop contact with the allergen?

It is important to avoid the allergen as soon as possible. Even inhaling tiny amounts may be enough to trigger your asthma.

Once you stop all contact with the allergen, you are likely to feel much better than you have for some time.

You can also attend our clinic for a while so we can keep an eye on your symptoms.

Will I need to stop working?

It is important that you avoid coming into contact with the allergen. However, with the right protection against the allergen, it may be possible to carry on working in your current job for the short term.

You will need to talk to your employer or occupational health doctor or nurse to see if changes can be made to your current job to make it safer. Alternatively, they may be able to give you another job. Most employers will try and help you in these ways. Your employer has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act to minimise contact to harmful substances at work.

If your employer cannot find you safe work, you may have to look for another job. Occupational asthma does not make you unfit for work, it just means that you have to avoid jobs that involve contact to the allergen that causes your asthma.

Does my employer need to tell anyone about my occupational asthma?

Your employer has a duty to inform the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that someone has been diagnosed with occupational asthma. Your name will not be given.

A member from the HSE will usually come and visit your workplace to see if there are ways to prevent other employees from developing occupational asthma.

Am I entitled to compensation?

It may be possible to claim a small amount of compensation from the Benefits Agency. This is known as the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. Unfortunately it is not available to people who are self-employed or in the armed forces. We can give you a leaflet explaining how to claim Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit or you can download information and a claim form from www.dwp.gov.uk.

If your employer cannot find you safe work, your employer may give you compensation. You will have to discuss this with your employer.

You may decide to take legal action against your employer. You can get help with this from the Citizens Advice Bureau. If you are in a trade union they will also be able to help you. Should you decide to make a legal claim, you must do so within three years of the date when you learned that you had occupational asthma.

Who can I contact for further information?

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إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على ترجمة فورية لمضمون هذه الوثيقة إلى اللغة العربية، يرجى منك الاتصال بأحد مستخدمينا بجناح المصلحة التي يتم فيها استشفائك. أحد موظفينا سيسعى لترتيب إجراءات الترجمة وإتمامها في الوقت المناسب لك.

Brosürteki bilginin Türkçe tercümesi için tedavi görüyor olduğunuz bölüme bas vurunuz. Bölüm personeli tercümenin gerçekleşmesini en kısa zamanda ayarlayacaktır.