

5. Medical Care

Every worker should keep a year-by-year record of their work history and dates of exposures to chemicals, noise, radiation, repetitive motion, etc. This record will be essential if faced with an injury or illness that may be work-related. If this should happen, early diagnosis and treatment is vital as is making sure that health care providers recognize the work-related source of the problem.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF WORK-RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS?

Symptoms of work-related health problems may include pain or discomfort in any part of the body or a change in bodily function. Examples include irritation of the eyes, nose, or throat; hoarseness or change in voice, cough, shortness of breath; burning, heaviness, tightness in the chest, skin irritation, itching, redness, rash; chills, indigestion, nausea, vomiting, weight loss, bleeding, headaches, light-headedness, fainting, confusion, fatigue, drowsiness, reduced memory, muscle weakness, poor coordination, numbness, pins-and-needles feeling, tremors, seizures, swelling.

Workers should suspect a workplace condition is causing problems if any of these circumstances exist:

- People have symptoms only – or most often – during work.
- Symptoms clear up on weekends and vacations.
- Several people at the same job have the same symptoms.

Workers with symptoms should see a doctor. They should tell the doctor they suspect their problems are work-related and explain very specifically why they believe this to be true. They should describe their work history and job duties to the doctor and give a list of exposures to chemicals, noise, radiation, etc. If possible, they should give the doctor *Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)* and *Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets (HSFS)* on the chemicals they work with.

WHAT WORK-RELATED ILLNESSES AND INJURIES ARE REPORTABLE?

If a doctor determines that a worker has one of a list of certain specific illnesses that is caused by – or made worse by – work, he or she is required to file an *Occupational Disease, Injury, or Poisoning Report for Physicians* with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services. The purpose of this report is to allow the Department to ensure that measures are taken by the employer to prevent co-workers from also becoming ill. Reporting forms are available by calling 609-984-1863 or online at www.state.nj.us/health/forms/occ-31.pdf.

OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESSES AND INJURIES THAT ARE REPORTABLE IN NEW JERSEY ARE:

- Work-related asthma.
- Extrinsic allergic alveolitis.
- Silicosis.
- Asbestosis.
- Pneumoconiosis.
- Occupational dermatitis.
- Work-related fatal injury.
- Work-related injury in children under age 18.
- Work-related carpal tunnel syndrome.
- Poisoning by known or suspected occupational exposure.
- Pesticide toxicity.
- Elevated levels of lead, arsenic, mercury, or cadmium in blood or urine.

FINDING A PHYSICIAN

There are physicians in and near to New Jersey who specialize in the evaluation and treatment of individuals exposed to hazards on the job.

WEBSITES WITH MORE INFORMATION



Physicians in New Jersey Specializing in Occupational & Environmental Illness

www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/survweb/oemdlst.htm

Another site where you can find an occupational physician is the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC) Clinic Directory at www.aoec.org/directory.htm. Or call AOEC at 888-347-2632. All AOEC member clinics meet specific criteria that promote providing high quality health care and patient rights. The AOEC Clinic in New Jersey is:

UMDNJ - Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Clinical Center for Occupational and Environmental Health
Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute
170 Frelinghuysen Road

Piscataway, New Jersey 08854

Phone: 732-445-0123

WHERE CAN PEOPLE CALL IN CASE OF A POISONING?

In case of a chemical poisoning, call:

New Jersey Poison Help

Phone: 800-222-1222

www.njpies.org

WORLD TRADE CENTER MEDICAL SCREENING PROGRAM

If a health problem may be related to working or volunteering at the World Trade Center or the surrounding area on September 11, 2001, or in the months that followed, contact the World Trade Center Medical Screening Program.

Phone: 888-702-0630

www.WTCexams.org

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL TESTING

Fifteen OSHA/NJPEOSH standards for chemicals require employers to provide medical screening and surveillance to monitor the health of workers who have suffered dangerous exposure to particularly hazardous substances. These standards address the following substances: acrylonitrile, arsenic, asbestos, 1,3-butadiene, benzene, cadmium, coke oven emissions, cotton dust, DBCP, ethylene oxide, formaldehyde, lead, methylene chloride, methylenedianiline and vinyl chloride. Six other standards also have medical requirements: bloodborne pathogens, compressed air environments, hazardous waste operations and emergency response, hazardous chemicals in labs, noise, and respiratory protection.

PUBLICATIONS WITH MORE INFORMATION



Screening and Surveillance: A Guide to OSHA Standards, OSHA Publication 3162, 2000. A quick reference to help locate and implement the medical requirements of OSHA/NJPEOSH standards.

Phone: 202-693-1888, OSHA Publications Office

www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3162.pdf

WEBSITES WITH MORE INFORMATION

NIOSH Topic Pages on Work-Related Diseases



- Asthma and Allergies www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/asthma/
- Bloodborne Disease www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/
- Cancer www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/cancer/
- Dermatitis www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/skin/
- Hearing Loss www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/
- Heat Stress www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/
- Heart Disease www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heartdisease/
- Latex Allergies www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/latex/
- Long Work Hours www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/workschedules/
- Lung Disease www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pneumoconioses/default.html
- Musculoskeletal Disorders www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/
- Pesticides-Related www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pesticides/
- Stress www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/stress/