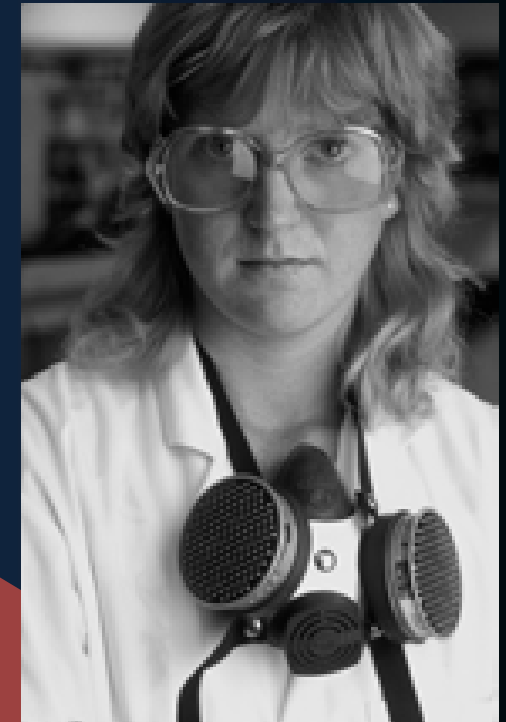


Work Related Asthma



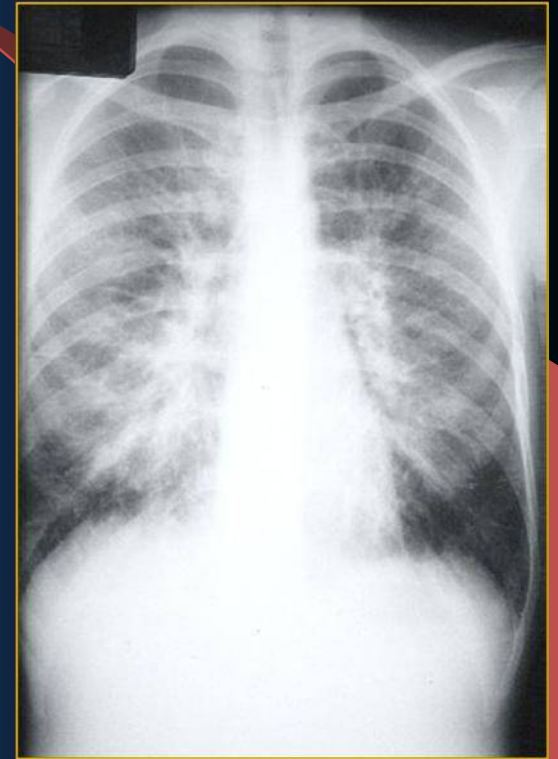
Carmine Tiano
Director of Occupational Health Services
Ontario Building Trades

What's Included in this Overview?

- What is work-related asthma?
- What are the symptoms of work-related asthma?
- What causes work-related asthma?
- Who gets work-related asthma?
- How is work-related asthma diagnosed?
- Can work-related asthma be prevented?

What is work-related asthma?

- Asthma is a lung disease that makes it hard to breathe.
- During an asthma attack, the airways in your lungs become narrow and too much mucus is produced.



What is work-related asthma?

- Work-related asthma is a type of asthma. Some workers can develop asthma from chemicals, dusts, or other exposures at work.
- Other workers already have asthma that is worsened by their work exposures.



What are the symptoms of work-related asthma?

- Wheezing
- Chest Tightness
- Shortness of Breath
- Coughing

Symptoms of work-related asthma

- Symptoms can show up within a few months after you are exposed to a chemical or dust, or they may not appear until you have been exposed for several years.
- You may first notice symptoms after you leave work each day. Often, the symptoms clear up before you return to work the next day. They usually worsen during the work week and get better or disappear during weekends and vacations.



What causes work-related asthma?

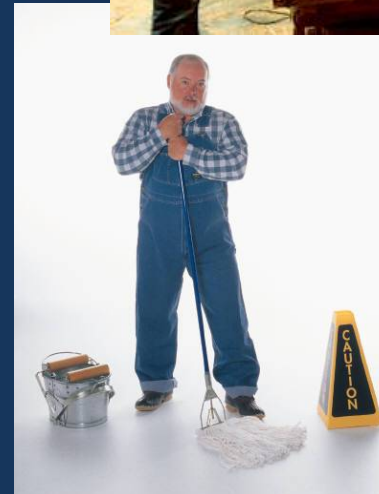
There are hundreds of exposures in the workplace that can cause work-related asthma. **Some examples include:**

- Wood dust, especially cedar
- Chemicals in polyurethane paints
- Animals and insects
- Grain and flour dust
- Latex gloves
- Cleaning agents

Who gets work-related asthma?

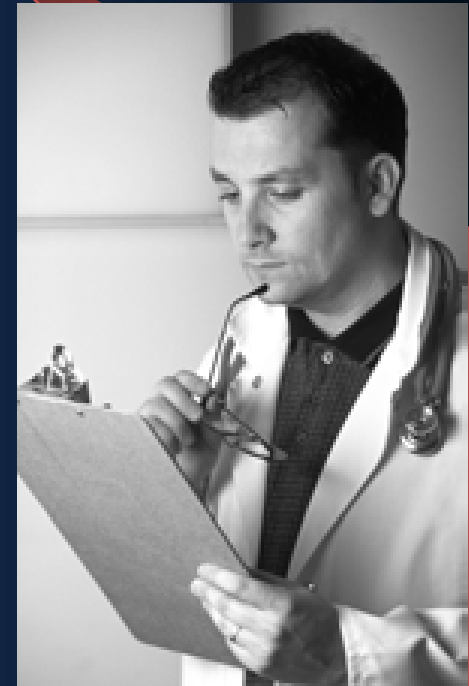
Workers in many different jobs can get work-related asthma. Some common examples include:

- Sawmill workers
- Healthcare providers
- Spray painters
- Janitors and cleaners
- Manufacturing workers
- Farm laborers



How is work-related asthma diagnosed?

- Your doctor can decide if you have work-related asthma.
 - First, your doctor will ask you about your medical history and breathing symptoms.
 - Then tests may be done to determine if you have asthma and not some other kind of lung condition.

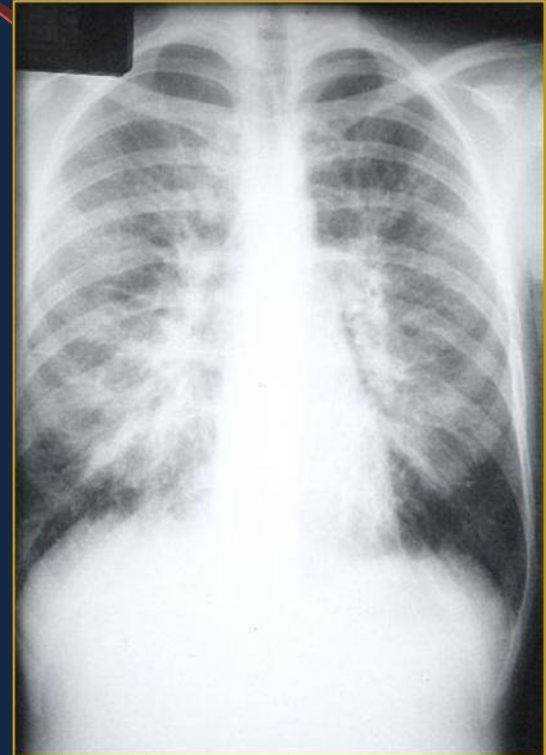


How is work-related asthma diagnosed?

These tests may include:

- Physical exam of your chest
- Chest x-ray
- Blood tests
- Breathing tests

If your doctor has confirmed that you do have asthma, then your doctor may do more tests to decide if your asthma is related to your work.



How is work-related asthma diagnosed?

If you have questions or are concerned about your breathing, see your doctor now.

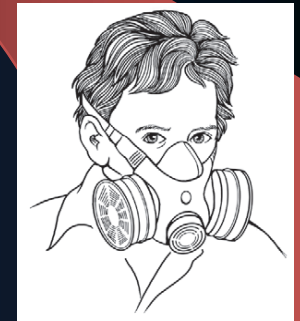
Asthma is a serious disease. If untreated, it may severely affect your health or even cause death.

Work-related asthma can get better if diagnosed early and treated properly.

Can work-related asthma be prevented?

Yes, there are steps that your employer can take to make your workplace healthier:

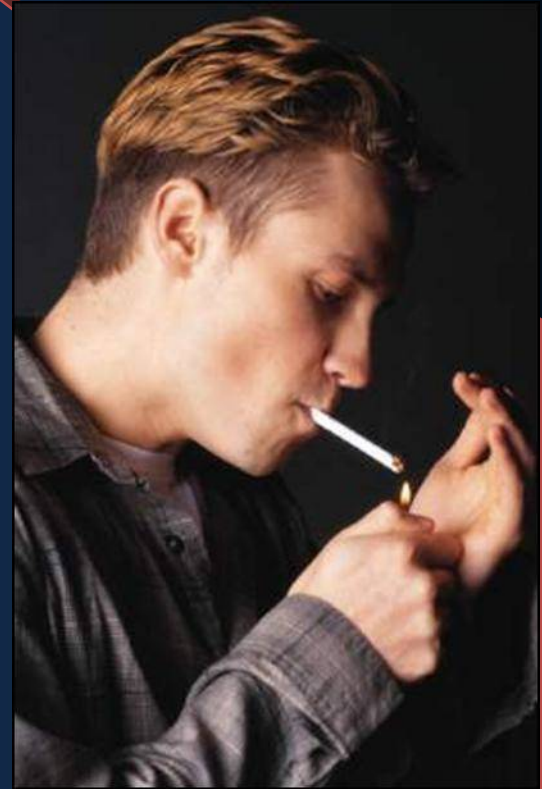
- Change the way things are done to remove or reduce exposures.
- Improve the ventilation.
- Provide respirators.
- Provide training.
- Conduct medical monitoring to find workers with symptoms early.



Can work-related asthma be prevented?

There are steps you can take too:

- Identify the substances in your work area that cause or make your asthma worse.
- Use a properly fitted face mask when working around asthma-causing substances.
- Move to a different work area, if possible.
- Because changing jobs may cause financial hardship, this should only be done after talking to your doctor.



Don't smoke or stop smoking.

Can work-related asthma be prevented?

Work-related asthma must be diagnosed and treated early or it may become a chronic (lifelong) illness. Therefore, it is **important to see your doctor now if you think you may have work-related asthma.**

Some workers might have a higher risk because of a family or personal history of allergy or asthma. These workers should talk to their doctor before entering trades with a lot of chemicals or dust.

