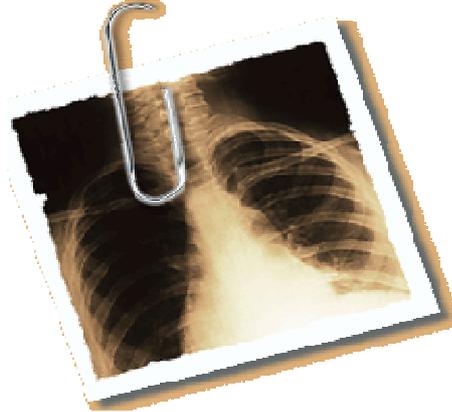




## OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

### What is an Occupational Disease?

An occupational disease is a health problem caused by exposure to a workplace health hazard.



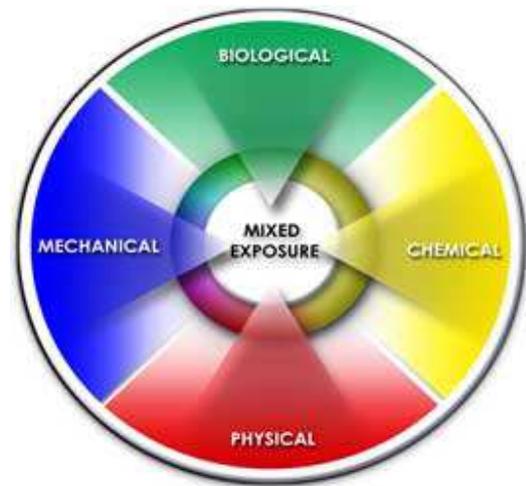
Your workplace should be healthy for your body and mind. You can help to keep yourself and your workplace healthy by being aware of health hazards in your environment.

### These workplace health hazards can cause an occupational disease:

- dust, gases, or fumes
- noise
- toxic substances (poisons)
- vibration
- radiation
- infectious germs or viruses
- extreme hot or cold temperatures
- extremely high or low air pressure

**Chemical agents** are the main cause of occupational skin diseases and disorders. These agents are divided into two types: primary irritants and sensitizers. Primary or direct irritants act directly on the skin through chemical reactions. Sensitizers may not cause immediate skin reactions, but repeated exposure can result in allergic reactions.

- A worker's skin may be exposed to hazardous chemicals through:
  - direct contact with contaminated surfaces,
  - deposition of aerosols,
  - immersion, or splashes.



- **Physical agents** such as extreme temperatures (hot or cold) and radiation (UV/solar radiation).
- **Mechanical trauma** includes friction, pressure, abrasions, lacerations and contusions (scrapes, cuts and bruises).
- **Biological agents** include parasites, microorganisms, plants and other animal materials.

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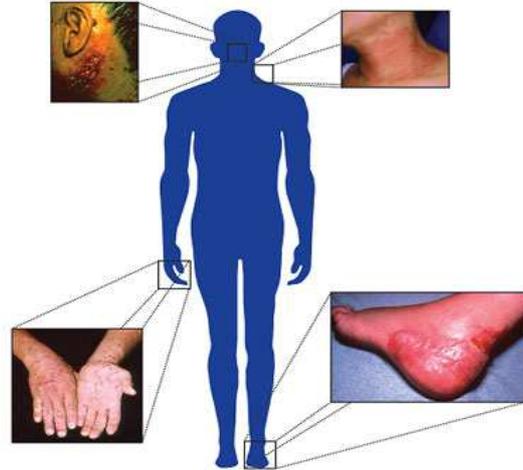


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### Workplace health hazards can cause three kinds of reactions in the body:

- **Immediate or acute reactions**, like shortness of breath or nausea, can be caused by a one-time event, (e.g., a chemical spill). These reactions are not usually permanent.
- **Gradual reactions**, like asthma or dermatitis (skin rashes), can get worse and persist when you are exposed over days, weeks or months. These reactions tend to last for a longer time.
- **Delayed reactions** or diseases that take a long time to develop, like lung cancer or loss of hearing, can be caused by long-term exposure to a substance or work activity. These reactions can be noticed long after the job is over.



- Find out what materials and substances are being used in your workplace.
- Find out how to work safely around materials and equipment in your workplace. Your supervisor is required to provide you with this information and appropriate training. You can also contact your joint health and safety committee or representative.
- Use protective equipment provided by your employer. Make sure that you know how to use it properly. If you don't know, ask.
- Be alert to symptoms or changes in your health.
- **Tell your doctor where you work, what you do, and what substances you work with.**

### Avoiding Occupational Diseases

#### What can you do?

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