

# Cleaning Products and Work-Related Asthma

## ASTHMA

Asthma is a condition that causes the airways into the lungs to tighten and swell making it hard for a person to breathe.

A person may experience all or some of the following symptoms:

- wheezing
- coughing
- tightness in the chest
- shortness of breath
- Having difficulty breathing

When a person experiences these symptoms, it is because something is irritating their lungs.

## WORK-RELATED ASTHMA

There are two types of work-related asthma.

1. **Work-aggravated asthma** is when you already have asthma, and it becomes worse because of the exposures at work.
2. **Occupational asthma** is when asthma is caused by exposure to a chemical or substance at work.

*Symptoms usually get worse at work and get better during weekends or vacations.*

If asthma is severe, symptoms may not get better even after time away from work.

## CLEANING PRODUCTS

Cleaning products or some of their ingredients are some of the more common asthma triggers.

- |                                  |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| - Carpet cleaner                 | - Toilet cleaner     |
| - Disinfectants (such as bleach) | - Ammonia            |
| - Floor wax stripper             | - Muriatic acid      |
| - Degreaser                      | - Quaternary ammonia |
| - Glass cleaner                  | - Pine oil cleaner   |
| - Tile cleaner                   | - Glutaraldehyde     |
|                                  | - Chloramine T       |

## WORKERS EXPOSED TO CLEANERS

Workers who use cleaners regularly can get asthma, such as:

- Hospital or health clinic workers
- Janitors, maids
- Maintenance workers
- Cosmetologists, hairdressers
- Restaurant workers
- Teachers, office workers

## SEE YOUR DOCTOR

**Do NOT ignore your symptoms!**

Make an appointment and tell your doctor:

- Your symptoms
- Where you work and what your job is
- What chemicals and materials you work with every day
- Tell your employer

**Work-related asthma is required to be reported by your doctor to the NM Department of Health.**

[NM Occupational Health Surveillance Program](#)

## PRACTICE SAFE CLEANING

- Wear personal protective equipment, such as goggles, gloves
- CAUTION:** dust masks won't keep chemicals from entering your lungs
- Do NOT use a cleaner at full strength
- Do NOT mix cleaning products
- Read warning labels and the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
- Use a fan to circulate the air in your work area
- Avoid using aerosol cleaners

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