

ASTHMA DATA TO ACTION

Work-related asthma should be evaluated in all adults with new-onset or worsening asthma.

The Problem

1 in **10** adults currently has asthma in New York State.

45% of working adults with asthma have something in their work environments causing or making their asthma worse.¹

Only **15%** of working adults with asthma report that they either told a health professional that their asthma was work-related or were told by a health professional that their asthma was work-related.¹

There are more than **400** substances found in workplaces that can trigger a person's asthma.²

Adults with work-related asthma report **increased hospitalizations³, reduced income and loss of employment.⁴**

New York State Resources

The **Occupational Health Clinic Network** assists doctors, employees, and employers with managing and preventing work-related asthma. Healthcare professionals may **contact the clinics for consultation or referral**. The network offers specialized medical diagnoses, high-quality care and support **services to workers regardless of the ability to pay**. A list of Occupational Health Clinics is available at: www.health.ny.gov/environmental/workplace/clinic.htm.

Surveillance of work-related asthma is conducted through the **Occupational Lung Disease Registry**. **Technical assistance and expertise** on controlling and preventing workplace exposures for individuals and companies is available toll free at **(866) 807-2130** or see www.health.ny.gov/forms/doh-384.pdf).

What Can Be Done

People With Asthma Can:

Keep daily records of asthma symptoms and talk to doctors when asthma gets better or worse.

Tell their doctors about their current jobs and any past jobs.

Identify and avoid triggers in the workplace that cause or make asthma worse.

Health Care Providers Can:

Take a detailed occupational history and talk to asthma patients about the possibility of workplace exposures causing or making their asthma worse.

Assess patients' specific asthma triggers and advise patients to make changes to the work environment to reduce or eliminate these triggers.

Consult with or refer patients to an occupational health specialist when their health history suggests an occupational exposure is exacerbating or contributing to their asthma.

Report a patient with clinical evidence of work-related asthma to the **Occupational Lung Disease Registry**.

Employers Can:

Follow federal health and safety guidelines. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 requires employers to provide workplaces free from recognized hazards.

Develop programs to prevent work-related asthma by reducing exposure to asthma triggers through elimination or substitution.

Train workers on workplace hazards, including precautions to take and methods for reporting hazards or problems.

Identify affected workers early and move employees to a different work area if feasible.

References

- 1) New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Asthma Call-Back Survey data, 2006-2010.
- 2) Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics database. Available from: www.aoec.org/ [Last accessed September 20, 2013].
- 3) Lemiere C, Forget A, Dufour MH, Boulet LP, Blais L. Characteristics and medical resource use of asthmatic subjects with and without work-related asthma. *J. Allergy Clin. Immunol.* 120, 1354-1359 (2007).
- 4) Cannon J, Cullinan P, Newman Taylor A. Consequences of Occupational Asthma. *BMJ.* 311, 602-603 (1995).

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