



A Union of Professionals

## WORK SHOULDN'T HURT

# Cleaning Products and Work-Related Asthma

Cleaning products are used in all workplaces and can cause or trigger work-related asthma. Employers should make sure the safest products and practices are used in the workplace so that people do not get asthma from work.

## Safer products are available

Safer products are available. For example, Green Seal GS-37 certified products do not contain ingredients that are known to cause asthma. Safer disinfectants can be found by looking for the Environmental Protection Agency's Design for the Environment label. Using safer products protects workers and others in these work settings.

### Use safer work methods by:

#### NEVER:

- Mixing cleaning products together;
- Using a cleaner at full strength when the instructions say to dilute it; and
- Disinfecting too much. Disinfect only in areas where it is necessary or required.

#### ALWAYS:

- Work with as much ventilation as possible, Open windows and doors if needed.
- Avoid using spray products and aerosols. Instead, pour cleaner onto a cloth to wipe on the surface. Microfiber cloths are best because less cleaning chemical is required.
- Use personal protective equipment such as goggles and gloves. Wear a respirator if your employer says one is necessary. *Caution:* Dust masks will *not* prevent these chemicals from entering your lungs.
- Read product warning labels and safety data sheets.

## What is work-related asthma?

Asthma is a chronic (long-term) lung disease where the flow of air is decreased, making it hard to breathe. Symptoms of asthma include:

- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing

Asthma is considered work-related when it is caused or made worse by something in the workplace. Even small exposures to certain substances can cause or trigger asthma. Symptoms may start right after you breathe in the substance or may start hours after leaving work. Sometimes a person can suddenly develop work-related asthma from chemicals they have worked with for years.

For more information, contact the Health and Safety team at [4healthandsafety@aft.org](mailto:4healthandsafety@aft.org) [May 2022]



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