



Workplace Allergens Can Make You Sick

Many employees develop allergies to substances encountered in the workplace, making occupational allergies a growing concern.

Continued exposure is the most common factor in occupational allergies, putting workers in agriculture, manufacturing, food processing and health care at great risk for potential problems.

The biological agents that can cause allergic reactions include viruses, bacteria, fungi and pollen that may accumulate in washrooms, humidifiers, ventilation pipes and ducts.

Office workers are not immune. Felt-tip markers, correction fluid, cleaning agents, paint and toner are some examples of items that release volatile organic compounds. Formaldehyde - found in glue, carpet, fabrics and furniture - also is a known offender.

What can you do to protect yourself? Talk to your supervisor about the possibility of reducing the risk of exposure by using specific protection such as respirators, gloves and other personal protective equipment.

Other means of reducing exposure include:

- Using more efficient ventilation and air cleaning systems.
- Using improved equipment designed to reduce the production of vapor mists and splashes.
- Enclosing equipment or processes to contain or collect emissions.

If you find you have a real problem with allergens in your work environment, try to limit your exposure to such things as:

- Perfumes
- Detergents
- Talc
- Ammonia
- Chlorine

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