



## Chemical Exposure

Knowing the hazards of chemicals is the first step in avoiding being exposed accidentally to them. Employers are required to inform you of chemical hazards at your workplace.

Learn what precautions to take and how to prevent adverse effects from being exposed to a potentially dangerous chemical. Understand the Globally Harmonized System (GHS) pictograms; consult the Safety Data Sheets (SDS); and ask your supervisor for guidance regarding your ability to work safely with chemicals.

### Hazards of Chemicals

- Chemicals are necessary on the job. Improper use or handling chemicals unsafely may lead to physical and health hazards capable of causing injury, disease and even death.
- Physical hazards of flammable or corrosive chemicals include dangerous fires, explosions or reactions with other chemicals.
- Health hazards of chemical exposure include nausea, head and stomach aches, skin and respiratory disorders and reproductive organ damage. Health hazards can be acute or chronic.
- Acute health hazards may occur after a short exposure. An example of an acute hazard would be the inhaling of an irritating airborne chemical that could burn the tissues of the lungs.
- Chronic health hazards occur gradually over time. Examples of these are carcinogens, mutagens and teratogens.



## Protection Against Chemical Hazards

To protect against a job site chemical exposure follow these basic procedures:

- Review SDS Section VI, Health Hazard Data for toxic effects, emergency and firstaid procedures.
- Review SDS Section VII, Handling and Storage, for precautions in the safe handling and storing of chemicals.
- Review SDS Section VIII, Control Measures, to select the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for the specific chemicals you are using.
- Know where the first aid kit, emergency eyewash and showers are located and know the proper procedures for using them.

## In Case of Accidental Exposure

- When providing first aid to a worker with a chemical exposure, protect yourself with the proper PPE. After first aid is applied to workers who have been exposed to dangerous chemicals, they should see their physicians for further treatment.
- If the injured workers are unresponsive, seek immediate emergency medical assistance. Upon the arrival of the emergency medical personnel, provide a copy of the appropriate SDS. This will help them determine the proper treatment.
- Remember, by reading warning labels, understanding SDS and applying the training your employer provides, you will protect yourself and your co-workers.

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Safety tips developed based on generally accepted safety standards believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes.

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