



## Occupational asthma

### What is occupational asthma?

Occupational asthma is a condition caused by exposure to certain substances in a person's working environment.

If a person is exposed to substances known as respiratory sensitisers, including wood dust, flour grain, dust from latex rubber and chemicals associated with spray painting, over a period of time, asthma symptoms may develop.

### Who is at risk of occupational asthma?

Bakers, vehicle spray painters, agriculture workers, hairdressers, carpenters and engineering workers can be vulnerable to occupational asthma, however the condition is not limited to these roles.

It is your employer's responsibility to ensure that you are properly protected from harmful substances at work. This may include installing extractor fans, providing personal protective equipment, such as breathing equipment, or protecting you from exposure to respiratory sensitisers altogether.



*Ronald was diagnosed with occupational asthma after being repeatedly exposed to harmful metalwork fluid particles at work. After being appointed a dedicated industrial disease solicitor, Thompsons Solicitors secured £33,000 in compensation for Ronald.*



## Signs and symptoms

Common symptoms of occupational asthma include:

- Wheezing
- Coughing
- Tightness in the chest
- Difficulty breathing
- Congestion
- Eye irritation

If you are suffering any of these symptoms during the working week and they ease during periods where you are away from work, then it is likely to be caused by your working conditions.

## Diagnosis and treatment

Visiting your GP is an important step in diagnosing occupational asthma. If your GP suspects you may have occupational asthma it is likely you will be referred to an occupational respiratory specialist.

Occupational asthma is treated and managed in the same way as other types of asthma, and an inhaler may be prescribed to help manage the condition.

If you are diagnosed with occupational asthma, this does not necessarily mean you will have to stop work. There are a number of detailed regulations in place designed to protect workers from contracting occupational asthma and your employer has a duty to ensure protections are in place.

Your employer will also need to find you an alternative role, where you are no longer exposed to respiratory sensitisers, if your condition persists.

In many cases, people who no longer come into contact with a respiratory sensitiser recover well from occupational asthma. However, if you believe you have been exposed to a harmful substance at work that has triggered occupational asthma then you may be entitled to make a compensation claim.



## Contact us

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with occupational asthma, you may be entitled to make an industrial disease compensation claim. For more information, call us on **0800 0 224 224** or visit our dedicated occupational asthma page: [www.thompsons.law.co.uk/industrial-disease/occupational-asthma](http://www.thompsons.law.co.uk/industrial-disease/occupational-asthma)