

Are your lungs being protected?

Controlling dust and fumes in food processing workplaces is essential to protect workers' lungs. Many ingredients used in food preparation can react with or irritate our lungs.

Allergic type asthma:

Dusts and food additives that can cause or aggravate asthma including:

- wheat & soya flour (up to 40 compounds can cause Bakers Lung)
- garlic, paprika and rice dust
- added enzymes e.g. α -amylase, pancreatin or savinase
- certain food coatings, herbs and spices.

The asthma is an allergic reaction to the dusts/enzymes. Symptoms may be delayed after exposure, eg. after work or on days off.

Work related asthma:

The symptoms improve on days away from work. Having these symptoms is not a diagnosis of work related asthma, but indicates the need for further medical investigation. Symptoms include:

- recurring sore or watering eyes
- recurring blocked or running nose
- recurring bouts of coughing;
- chest tightness or wheezing and
- any persistent history of chest problems.

For about 30% of people, work related asthma can cause long term lung problems. There is a high risk of unemployment in people with these conditions. Prevention is essential.

Avoiding exposure to Asthma causing agents

- Food grade talcum powder
- Sugar dust (at high levels can cause teeth cavities).

Labels on substances that cause asthma/allergies:

- H334 - may cause allergy or asthma symptoms or breathing difficulties if inhaled
- P261 - avoid breathing dust/fume/gas/mist/vapours/spray
- P285 - in case of inadequate ventilation wear respiratory protection
- *warning symbols include:*



Never use compressed air to clean away dusts, fumes & mists.

Cooking oil mists can cause eye pain and tears, coughing and - if levels are high enough - shortness of breath.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST OPTION.

What can workplaces do to preserve lung health in food workplaces?

design production processes to prevent dust/fumes entering the air;

- dust suppression;
- good extraction ventilation; and
- encourage employees to have regular health check ups when using substances that can cause asthma