

Health Monitoring FAQs For Workers



Health Monitoring is subject to the provisions of the respective Health and Safety Regulations. Health Monitoring is provided subject to workers having been (or likely to have been) exposed to hazardous substances or work environments.

What is health monitoring?

Health monitoring means the monitoring of a person to identify changes in the person's health status because of exposure to certain substances.

Health monitoring may include:

- consultation, for example, answering questions regarding previous occupational and medical history or lifestyle, for example dietary, smoking and drinking habits and discussing with the worker how this may affect their health.
- a physical examination, for example skin checks or a spirometry (lung function) test
- clinical tests, for example, urine or blood samples
- X-rays.

At the conclusion of the health monitoring assessment, the examining registered medical practitioner will provide a health monitoring report.

Hazardous substances requiring health monitoring

Substances that require health monitoring of workers can be found [here](#), or if there is a



significant risk that the worker will be (has been) exposed to a hazardous chemical not specified in legislation and valid techniques are available to detect the effect on the worker's health, or a valid way of determining biological exposure to the hazardous chemical is available.

Significant risk means exposure to the chemical is likely to be hazardous to a workers health. If there is uncertainty regarding the level of exposure, health monitoring is required. If workers are at any risk of exposure to asbestos or perform lead risk work, they **must be provided health monitoring regardless of the level of risk.**

Who does health monitoring?

Health monitoring must be performed by, or under the supervision of, a registered medical practitioner with experience in health monitoring. Although **workers must be consulted about the choice of medical practitioner used for the health monitoring**, in most cases it will not be

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their own medical practitioner unless they have the necessary experience to do the work.

The PCBU/employer who engages a worker must pay all the expenses (including travel costs and paid time off work) related to the health monitoring program.

What information is contained in a health monitoring report?

The report must include:

- the worker's details, the name and address of the business or undertaking they work for, and the name of the registered medical practitioner
- any test results that indicate whether or not the worker has been exposed to a hazardous chemical
- any advice that test results indicate that the worker may have a disease, injury or illness as a result of carrying out the work involving a chemical that triggered the requirement for health monitoring
- any recommendations and actions requiring new or changed control measures or medical counselling, including whether the worker can continue using or handling the chemical.

The medical practitioner must provide a health monitoring report to the PCBU/employer, who must then provide a copy of the report to the worker (for them to keep). If a worker has not received their copy within 10 business days following health monitoring, they should make a request of the PCBU/employer. **The PCBU must also provide a copy of an adverse health monitoring report to the regulator** and in consultation with the worker(s) and their HSR, review current controls and minimise the risk of further exposure.

The report **should not contain confidential information on the worker's general health status**. The report should not contain details of medical conditions which were disclosed to, or are diagnosed as having by, the medical practitioner conducting the health monitoring if the condition has no relevance or bearing on the work been performed by the worker. Details of pre-existing medical conditions can only be included in the report with the worker's written permission.

Can a worker refuse health monitoring?

A worker must follow any reasonable instruction given by the PCBU/employer to allow them to comply with their health monitoring duties. **If they refuse, the worker may be contravening their duties under the Health and Safety Act**. At a minimum, the PCBU/employer is likely to stop the worker working with the hazardous chemical.

For an instruction to be reasonable, a worker must have been using, handling, generating, storing or has been exposed to hazardous chemicals or asbestos, and are at significant health risk from exposure to these hazardous chemicals or about to start or do lead risk work. **The health monitoring program must have been developed in genuine consultation with workers** directly affected and their HSR before engagement of a health monitoring doctor.

Health monitoring appointments must have minimal impact on a worker and be during the worker's normal work hours. Where this is not possible, for example in the case of shift workers, the appointment must be at a time agreed to by the worker. **If a worker has concerns regarding health monitoring or whether an instruction is reasonable they should contact their HSR or our [union](#).**



Confidentiality and Record Management

The PCBU/employer **must keep health monitoring reports as confidential records** and must not disclose them to another person without the worker's written consent, except where they must provide the records under a law.

The PCBU/employer must keep health monitoring reports separate from normal workers' records like payroll or human resources data, to prevent unauthorised people from seeing them. Health monitoring reports may not be used for any purpose other than monitoring the health of workers.

The PCBU/employer must keep workers' health monitoring records for hazardous chemicals and lead for at least 30 years after the record is made and asbestos health monitoring records for at least 40 years.

Additional Resources

For more AMWU health and safety FAQs go to Resources...

https://www.amwu.org.au/info_and_fact_sheets

Contact our Union:



https://www.amwu.org.au/contact_us



1300 732 698

Or speak to your organiser