

Specific Symptom Patterns and Patterns of Exposure for Occupational Asthma

Respiratory symptoms that may be associated with occupational asthma include:

Dyspnea

Wheezing

Dry cough

Chest tightness

Increased breathing effort

Characteristic symptom patterns include:

Improvement in symptoms during vacations or days off (may take a week or more)

Initial symptoms may occur after a high level of exposure (spill)

Symptoms may be immediate (<1 minute), delayed (most commonly 2 to 8 hours after exposure), or nocturnal

Patterns of exposure

Do symptoms of asthma develop after a worker starts a new job or after new materials are introduced on a job? (A substantial period of time may elapse between the initial exposure and the development of symptoms.)

Do symptoms develop within minutes of specific activities or exposure at work?

Do delayed symptoms occur several hours after exposures, during the evenings of work days, or at night?

Do symptoms occur less frequently or not at all on days away from work and on vacations?

Do symptoms occur more frequently on getting to work?

Did symptoms occur initially after a high-level exposure (spill)?

Table from *Physicians Information and Education Resource (PIER), Occupational Asthma* module.