



**Occupational Health  
Clinics for Ontario  
Workers Inc.**

**Centres de santé  
des travailleurs (ses)  
de l'Ontario Inc.**

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### **Am I at risk for an occupational disease?**

In today's society we are constantly receiving information from television, radio, print media and of course the internet. The information deals with all kinds of ways to live better while identifying various health risks. However, how accurate is the information we are bombarded with and where can we go to verify this information? A good web site for occupational risks is "Haz-Map, Occupational Exposure to Hazardous Agents" a product of the National Library of Medicine in the United States and their Toxicology and Environmental Health Information Program (<http://hazmap.nlm.nih.gov/>)

This website allows you to retrieve information about health related hazards of a particular job, a specific task related to that job or chemical and/or biological agents you may work with. It is easy to use and definitions of unfamiliar terms can be accessed through hyperlinks to a Glossary. You can browse through hazardous agents, occupational diseases, a list of all topics or search by specific agent, disease, job or enter any term and do a text search. If you click on the "More Searches" tab and go to "Non-occupational Activities" then to "By Types of Activities" you have the option of searching non-occupational areas such as Environments, Food & Drugs as well as Hobbies. On the home page is "Haz-Map Help" to aid you in using the site, a "Glossary" and "References" which includes online books, databases and other related links. At any time during your search click on the "Haz-Map" title at the top of the page to return to the home page.

If you are concerned about a specific substance you work with type the name in the search box followed by clicking on "Agents". More than one result can appear so you would choose the most appropriate one. Information will then be displayed about alternative names, synonyms, description, sources of this agent and uses in various occupations or tasks, comments briefly discussing the occupational disease(s) associated with this agent, adverse effects, toxicity information, diseases associated with exposure and various manufacturing processes that use this agent.

It is also possible to search by "Job" and retrieve a general description, a list of specific tasks associated with this job including links to additional pages for a detailed description.

Searching by "Disease" will tell you if the disease is considered acute or chronic, other names for this condition, a comments section briefly discussing the disease from an occupational standpoint, symptoms, and job tasks associated with the disease and agents which are known to cause the disease.

A text search is useful when you have been unable to find what you are looking for in the other 3 categories. This could be due a lack of information at this time on the topic. It is important to be as specific as possible to reduce the number of results. For example, if you search "prostate cancer" using "Text Search", the results will include all cancers. By using only "prostate" you will get more specific results.

On your search page results you will also find links to other NLM databases. Sometimes the information can be very technical once you leave the Haz-Map site but at this point you should have a better understanding of your concerns and it may be time to discuss them with a professional.

**Heather Potvin is the Information Technician with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. For additional resources, please visit us on our website ([www.ohcow.on.ca/clinics/sudbury](http://www.ohcow.on.ca/clinics/sudbury)) or call (705) 523-2330.**