

## Follow Safe Work Practices

In addition to things your employer may do, there are things you can do at work to protect yourself (Table 2)

- tell your supervisor
- complete an employee incident report (as applicable) and
- notify the JHSC (Joint Health and Safety Committee) or health and safety representative, and/or union representative if you have one.



TABLE 2

### Nail and Hair Do's and Don'ts

#### Applying artificial fingernails

- Use a ventilated downdraft table
- Use dispenser bottles with small openings only large enough for an application brush to enter.
- Use pressure sensitive (spring-loaded) stoppers to decrease the amount of evaporation of nail liquid
- Close product containers immediately after use.
- Clean dirty brushes on a paper towel or gauze pad; dispose immediately in a sealed waste bin.
- Remove waste from bin several times a day to minimize exposure to vapours.
- Wear dust masks when filing acrylic or natural nails for protection against dust. *Note that dust masks provide NO protection against vapours.*

#### Hair-dressing

- Mix chemicals in a separately vented room if possible (bleaches, perm solutions, dyes).
- Clean up all spills promptly.



For more information, contact:

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers  
www.ohcow.on.ca or 1-877-817-0336

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services  
A Health & Safety Ontario Partner  
www.wsps.ca or 1-877-494-WSPS (9777)

The Lung Association  
Asthma Action Helpline  
www.on.lung.ca or 1-888-344-LUNG (5864)

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board  
www.wsib.on.ca or 1-800-465-5606

Ministry of Labour health and safety information:  
www.labour.gov.on.ca or 1-877-202-0008

**Contact The Lung Association, OHCOW or WSPS for the companion booklet, *Work-related Asthma: Preventing Work-related Asthma in Hairdressing and Nail Salons*, which accompanies this fact sheet.**

For these, and other resources, visit [www.olapep.ca/wra/resources](http://www.olapep.ca/wra/resources).

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## Work-Related Asthma and You

FACTS FOR WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS



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Did you know that if you work in a hairdressing, nail or beauty salon, you may be at risk for developing asthma, as a result of your work? Or if you already have asthma, some of the chemicals in your workplace may make it worse?

## What is Asthma?

Asthma is a serious long-term lung disease that makes it difficult to breathe. People who have asthma have increased sensitivity in the airways. The airways become irritated and inflamed when substances that cause or provoke asthma are inhaled. Symptoms include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and tight chest.

## What is Work-Related Asthma?

Asthma is work-related when it is caused (occupational asthma) or made worse (work-exacerbated asthma) by a substance that a person comes in contact with at work.

## Who is at Risk for Work-Related Asthma in Hair and Nail Salons?

Anyone working in a beauty, hair or nail salon may be at risk for work-related asthma, depending on what chemicals are used in the workplace. Some of the tasks and chemicals that are found in hair and nail salons are listed in Table 1 and on our website [www.olapep.ca/wra/](http://www.olapep.ca/wra/) resources.



TABLE 1

### Chemicals that May Cause Work-Related Asthma in the Hairdressing and Nail Salons

TASK	ASTHMA GENIC CHEMICAL
Washing hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shampoos and Conditioners (Sericin)</li> </ul>
Bleaching hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ammonium, potassium, sodium persulfate (Persulfates)</li> <li>Natural rubber latex in gloves</li> </ul>
Colouring hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permanent hair dyes containing ethylenediamine, monoethanolamine</li> <li>Henna</li> <li>Natural rubber latex in gloves</li> </ul>
Curling hair (perms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permanent wave solutions containing ammonia</li> <li>Natural rubber latex in gloves</li> </ul>
Styling hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hair sprays (Polyvinylpyrrolidone, Sericin)</li> <li>Hair straighteners (Formaldehyde, methylene glycol)</li> </ul>
Applying artificial nails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Methyl methacrylate (MMA)</li> <li>Ethyl methacrylate (EMA)</li> <li>Cyanoacrylate</li> <li>Formaldehyde</li> <li>Natural rubber latex in gloves</li> </ul>
Manicuring, general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human nail dust (respiratory irritation)</li> <li>Nail polish (Formaldehyde)</li> </ul>



## How to Recognize WRA

### Assess risk

To help find out whether you may have work-related asthma, you can ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have symptoms of asthma (cough, chest tightness, wheeze and/or shortness of breath)?  Y  N
- Did my symptoms of asthma first start, or become worse, after I began to work in the job or field of work?  Y  N
- Do my symptoms get worse as the workday or work week goes on?  Y  N
- Do my symptoms decrease on holidays and/or when I am away from work?  Y  N
- Do I work with any asthma-causing agents listed in Table 1 or any other known asthma-causing agent?  Y  N
- Was there an unusual exposure at work (such as a chemical spill) within 24 hours before my symptoms started?  Y  N
- Do my co-workers have symptoms of asthma?  Y  N

**If you answered "yes" to questions 1 and 2, you need to be assessed by a doctor. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR DOCTOR**

## Get a Diagnosis From a Doctor

The diagnosis of occupational asthma requires special tests, such as breathing tests done at work and away from work.

