



It's About Making A Difference.



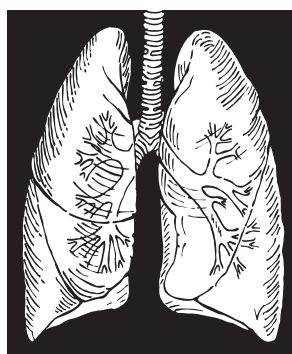
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Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc.

# BAKER'S ASTHMA

**Asthma is a common lung disease that makes breathing difficult. It can be a severe and life-threatening condition, affecting a person's ability to work and their overall quality of life.**



## What is Baker's Asthma?

Asthma that is caused by breathing in hazardous substances in the workplace, is called occupational asthma. Bakeries are among the industries with the highest risk of occupational asthma. The name Baker's asthma is commonly used to describe the disease in bakery employees.

## What Causes Baker's Asthma?

Baker's asthma is caused by breathing in flour dust and other substances commonly found in bakeries and similar workplaces. The following substances commonly found in bakeries may cause Baker's Asthma:

- Flour and Grains such as wheat, rye, barley, soy or buckwheat.
- Additives and Enzymes that are added to improve the bread quality.
- Other Allergens such as yeast, eggs, sesame seeds, nuts, smoke, fumes and dust mites.

## What Are the Symptoms of Baker's Asthma?

People suffering from Baker's asthma often do not realize that their symptoms are work-related. The symptoms include some or all of the following:

- cough
- shortness of breath
- wheezing
- chest tightness

The symptoms usually become worse over the course of the working day and throughout the workweek, and improve over the weekend and during vacations. The person with Baker's asthma may need to be removed from the area or workplace to prevent further exposure.

## How Can Baker's Asthma be Prevented?

Baker's asthma can be largely prevented through eliminating or reducing the level of flour dust, additives and other agents being breathed in by bakery workers. Both the employers and employees have a hand in preventing baker's asthma. The control of exposure to any hazardous product is a step-by-step process.

## AN EMPLOYER SHOULD:

- First try to eliminate the substance(s) causing the asthma from the workplace.
- When elimination is not possible, substitute with ingredients that are less harmful and produce less dust, for example, dust reduced flour and liquid enzymes.
- Enclose dusty machinery and install local exhaust ventilation to control the level of flour dust released.
- Provide training to employees on safe working and housekeeping methods, such as wet-scrubbing or vacuuming surfaces.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE), such as a face mask, to employees and provide training on how to use PPE properly. Control the flour dust level in workplace air to the lowest level possible, keeping below the guidelines set by the Occupational Health & Safety Act. Monitor the levels by regular air sampling.

*Informing employees about potential workplace hazards and providing proper training is important. Seek advice from occupational health professionals on how to recognize, evaluate and control workplace hazards and their health effects. Provide education and information to employees on Baker's asthma and its control measures.*

## AN EMPLOYEE SHOULD:

- Learn about the hazards in the workplace by speaking to their health and safety representative; an occupational health professional, such as an occupational hygienist, nurse or doctor, or their employer.
- Follow safe work practices to reduce dusts.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) in dusty areas.
- Report any malfunction in dust control measures, such as a broken ventilation system.
- Participate in all health and safety programs in the workplace.
- Maintain a high level of personal hygiene.
- Be aware of the early signs of Baker's asthma.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE HAVING PROBLEMS BREATHING?

Early recognition is very important to help prevent worsening of the illness. If you have the symptoms of Baker's asthma:

- Make an appointment immediately with your family doctor.
- Tell your doctor your symptoms, where you work, what your job is and what substances you use on a daily basis. Bring this sheet to your doctor.
- You are encouraged to seek assistance from an occupational health professional, such as an occupational health doctor or nurse. Your joint health and safety committee, union health and safety representatives and injured worker groups are also good resources.

Baker's asthma, like all types of occupational asthma, can be serious and debilitating if left untreated. Early recognition and effective control measures can greatly reduce the risk of permanent disability and the high human and financial costs of OA.

### For more information, please contact:

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers:  
[www.ohcow.on.ca](http://www.ohcow.on.ca) or 1-877-817-0336

Industrial Accident Prevention Association:  
[www.iapa.ca](http://www.iapa.ca) or 1-800-669-4939

The Asthma Society of Canada:  
[www.asthma.ca](http://www.asthma.ca) or 1-866-787-4050

Ontario Lung Association Asthma Action Help-line:  
1-800-668-7682

Ontario Lung Association:  
[www.on.lung.ca](http://www.on.lung.ca) or 1-888-566-5864

Workplace Safety & Insurance Board:  
[www.wsib.ca](http://www.wsib.ca) or 1-800-465-5606

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