

JUNE Safety Talk

Topic: How Chemicals Can Harm You

You may be exposed to a variety of chemicals through your work.

Hazardous chemicals may be harmful to your health. You have a right to know the hazards of the products you work with, through your organizations' Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS).

One component of WHMIS is the requirement for labels – on products received from the supplier, and on containers used in the workplace. The labels need to provide the worker with enough information to know how to use the product safely.

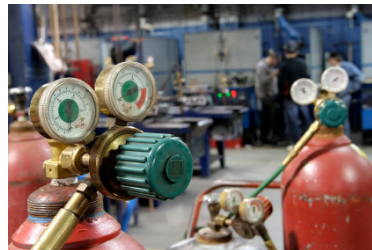


Another component of WHMIS is the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). Every person who uses hazardous products in the workplace needs to have access to MSDSs for every product. Access may be in paper form, or through an electronic means (on the Intranet or by fax).

How do Chemicals enter the body?

There are five ways you can be harmed by chemicals you are using, if not properly protected and if the chemicals are not used safely:

1. **Inhalation:** If airborne, the chemical can enter your body by breathing it in. Control of airborne exposure through local exhaust ventilation, and appropriate personal protective equipment (Respirators), are two ways to reduce inhalation exposure.



2. **Skin contact:** Some hazardous chemicals can injure the skin directly, or may be absorbed into the body through the skin. Controls would include ensuring the product can't touch your skin through use of correct procedures, and proper clothing and gloves (PPE).

3. **Eye contact:** Some chemicals can seriously injure your eyes. Controls again include proper use of the product so it can't ever reach your eyes, and use of suitable goggles, glasses or faceshield.



4. **Ingestion:** Eating or drinking food contaminated by chemicals is another route of exposure. You should not have food in the area you are using chemicals. After using hazardous products, always wash your hands thoroughly and effectively, before eating, drinking or smoking.
5. **Injection:** Sharp objects can puncture the skin and inject chemicals (or viruses) into the body. Handle hazardous products with care. Follow appropriate safe work procedures when dealing with sharps, including the use of tongs and appropriate hand protection.

