

## Protect Yourself... Make Cleaning Safer

**NEVER** mix cleaning products.

**NEVER** use a cleaner at full strength when the instructions say to dilute it.

### **ALWAYS:**

- ▷ Store products in their original containers.
- ▷ Leave windows and doors open if possible, or use a fan to circulate air, especially when cleaning in small or closed spaces.
- ▷ Try to avoid using spray products and aerosols. Instead of spraying, wet a rag to wipe on the surface.
- ▷ Use less toxic cleaners whenever possible.
- ▷ Use personal protective equipment:
  - Wear goggles and/or gloves to prevent eye and skin contact with hazardous chemicals.
  - Know that dust masks will NOT prevent these chemicals from entering your lungs.
- ▷ Learn more:
  - Read warning labels on the products you use.
  - Read the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). The MSDS tells you the ingredients in the product, and the effects those ingredients have on your health. Your employer should have a copy.

Get informed ► Check out these Web sites:

[www.cleansolutions.org](http://www.cleansolutions.org)

[www.mass.gov/epp](http://www.mass.gov/epp)

[www.informinc.org](http://www.informinc.org)

[www.green Seal.org](http://www.green Seal.org)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

### **Massachusetts Department of Public Health Occupational Health Surveillance Program**

250 Washington Street, 6th Floor  
Boston, MA 02108

[www.mass.gov/dph/ohsp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/ohsp)  
(617) 624-5632



In case of an emergency, contact the  
National Poison Control Center:  
1-800-222-1222

# CAUTION

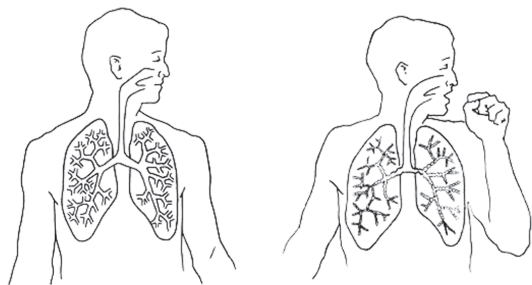


## ASTHMA AND CLEANING PRODUCTS AT WORK

If you work with or around cleaning products  
and are having breathing problems,  
read this information.



## ASTHMA IS A DISEASE THAT CAN MAKE IT HARD TO BREATHE.



### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ASTHMA?

- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing

### WHAT IS WORK-RELATED ASTHMA?

Work-related asthma is asthma that is caused or made worse by some substances in the workplace. Even small exposures to certain substances can trigger asthma symptoms, and make it harder to breathe.

Symptoms may start right after you breathe in a particular substance. Sometimes, symptoms may not start until many hours after leaving work.

Symptoms usually get worse at work and get better during vacations or long weekends. If asthma is severe, symptoms may not get better, even after time away from work.

## ▶ CAN WORKING WITH CLEANING PRODUCTS CAUSE ASTHMA?

**YES.** Some cleaning products contain chemicals that can cause asthma. If you already have breathing problems, cleaning products can make them worse.

Some people who work with cleaning products, or work in areas where cleaners are used, can get breathing problems from them. It could also happen because of a spill or because cleaning products were mixed together.



## WHO IS EXPOSED TO CLEANING PRODUCTS?

You could be exposed to cleaning products if you use them as part of your job, or if you work in areas where cleaning products are used.

### TYPES OF CLEANERS THAT CAN CAUSE BREATHING PROBLEMS:

- Disinfectants (such as bleach)
- Floor wax strippers
- Toilet cleaners

### SOME WORKERS WHO MAY BE AT RISK:

- Janitors
- Housekeepers
- Nurses or nurses aides
- Hotel maintenance staff
- Restaurant workers
- Teachers, especially elementary
- Office workers



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I MIGHT HAVE ASTHMA?



If you work with or around cleaning products and experience ANY of the asthma symptoms listed, talk to your doctor.

Write down the names of the products you work with to show your doctor, and tell your doctor when your symptoms occur.

Work-related asthma can be serious and make you very sick. If something you work around is causing your asthma, there may be a safer product to use. Your doctor can give you medicine to treat your asthma.