



**An Introduction
to Homecare Health and Safety**

Asthma Among Home Health Professionals


Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health




Credits

Resources:

- Homecare workers' handbook: *Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others* .
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-102/default.html>
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-103/pdf/2015-103.pdf>
- NIOSH Hazard Review: "Occupational Hazards and Home Health Care."
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-125/pdfs/2010-125.pdf>

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Session Goals

- Identify common environmental risks homecare workers may be exposed to.
- Outline the potential impacts from environmental risks, including respiratory effects like asthma.
- Describe strategies and tools that can reduce risks.
- Follow positive problem-solving steps with clients to reduce risks.



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Welcome and Introductions

Please tell us

- Your name.
- Your role in homecare.
- How long have you worked in homecare?
- What are some of the safety and health issues you've experienced or are worried about?



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Four Areas of Risk in Homecare

1. Muscle and bone injuries, and strain.
2. Exposure risks.
3. Emotional and mental stress.
4. Emergency and personal safety.



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Health and Safety at Risk Because ...

- You are sometimes in a hurry—trying to do too much in too little time.
- You don't want to let clients down, and you need your wages, so you work when hurt or sick.
- You may not have received formal training—or haven't been trained enough—to know how to maintain your health and safety.



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Also at Risk Because ...

- Like any caretaker, you put doing what clients want and need over your own health and safety. You want to care for them in a way that makes them comfortable.
- Sometimes clients want you to do things that aren't safe and it's difficult to set healthy boundaries.

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Today's Focus: Exposure Risks

- Allergens
- Airborne germs
- Cleaning agents and chemicals
- Pets
- Latex
- Second-hand smoke
- Insects and pests



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What about Asthma Triggers?

- Indoor Air Quality
 - Mold
 - Cigarettes
 - Chemicals
 - Dirt/Dust
 - Paints/Solvents
- Animals and Insects
- Rubber Latex
- Cleaning and Disinfecting Agents
- Fragrances
- Pets
- Pollen

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Allergen vs Irritant???

- Allergen - Any substance that produces an allergic reaction when it comes into contact with a sensitive individual
 - Pollen, mold, animal dander, dust mites and cockroach feces
- Irritant – A substance that is irritating and can trigger an asthma attack, even though they may not cause an allergic reaction.
 - Tobacco smoke, fireplace, candles, incense
 - Air pollution, strong chemical odors or fumes
 - Perfumes, air fresheners, or other scented products

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Asthma and Work

Work-Related Asthma (WRA)

- Asthma symptoms are triggered by an exposure to a substance at work (and not to stimuli encountered outside the workplace).

Work-Aggravated Asthma

- Characterized by a worsening of pre-existing asthma arising from conditions attributable to a particular work environment.

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Work-Related Asthma – What you Should Know

- Studies show that between 15-30% of all adult asthma is caused by conditions or chemicals at work.
- A few examples include flour, some cleaning chemicals, certain welding fumes, latex, animal dander, epoxies, chlorine, isocyanates, formaldehyde, wood dust, some disinfectants, and metalworking fluids.
- There are over 320 substances known to cause new asthma in people who did not have it before.

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WRA – What you Should Know

- Sometimes people can work around a substance for many years without a problem. They can later become sensitized, or allergic, to the substance and get new asthma.
- Also, any irritating substance or common allergen can worsen asthma symptoms in a person who already has asthma.

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How do you know if you have WRA?

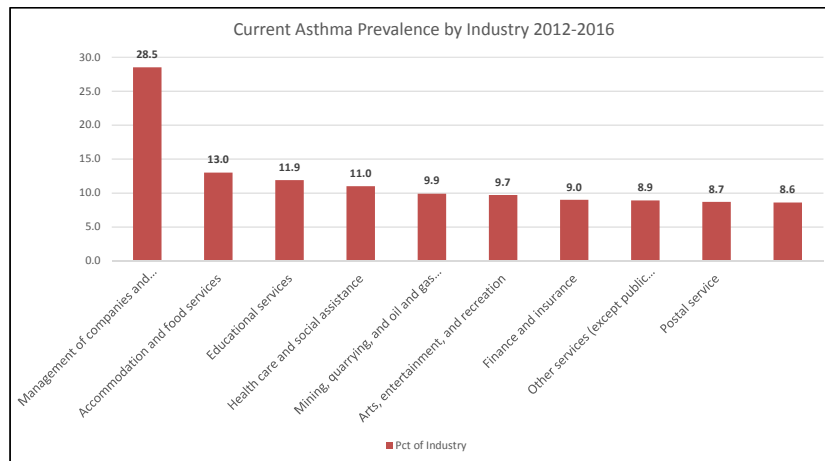
You might have work-related asthma if:

- your breathing problems are worse at work;
- your breathing problems are better when you are away from work for a few days, like on weekends or during vacations;
- your breathing problems started after you began a new job;
- you have new asthma that started as an adult;
- you have had asthma but it has become worse as an adult.

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Asthma Prevalence in NH by Industry

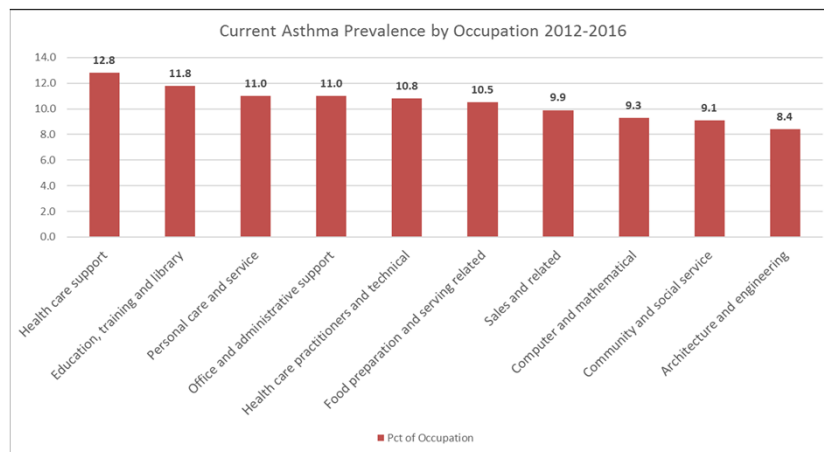


NH BRFSS Data

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Asthma Prevalence in NH by Occupation



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WRA in New Hampshire

Proportion of ever-employed adults that were told by a doctor or other health professional that their asthma was work related (diagnosed with work-related asthma)

- 2012 – 12%
- 2013 – 8.1%
- 2014 – 9.8%
- 2015 – 9.8%
- 2016 – 13.5%

NH BRFSS Asthma
Call-Back Survey

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BRFSS – 25 States 2014 – Has Been Told They Have Asthma – by Industry

Industry (2-Digit NAICS Code)	Unweighted Frequency	Prevalence (%)	Lower Confidence Limit	Upper Confidence Limit
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (11)	330	8.6	6.5	10.6
Mining, Oil & Gas (21)	110	10.4	7.0	13.8
Utilities (22)	95	6.4	4.3	8.5
Transportation & Warehouse (48-49)	364	10.0	8.1	11.9
Construction (23)	545	10.2	8.3	12.1
Manufacturing (31-33)	907	10.6	9.4	11.7
Wholesale Trade (42)	127	8.8	6.4	11.1
Retail Trade (44-45)	1021	12.8	11.2	14.4
Health Care & Social Assistance (62)	2210	14.1	12.7	15.5
Information (51)	247	11.1	8.3	13.9
Finance & Insurance (52)	509	12.2	9.9	14.5

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/surveillance/brfss/2014/asthma.html>

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BRFSS – 25 States 2014 – Has Been Told They Have Asthma – by Occupation

Occupation (2-Digit SOC Code)	Unweighted Frequency	Prevalence (%)	Lower Confidence Limit	Upper Confidence Limit
Management (11)	1240	11.4	10.0	12.7
Business & Financial Operations (13)	453	12.1	9.7	14.5
Computer & Mathematical (15)	355	10.0	8.2	11.8
Architecture & Engineering (17)	267	9.9	7.7	12.0
Life, Physical & Social Science (19)	201	12.7	9.4	15.9
Community & Social Services (21)	323	13.2	10.2	16.1
Legal (23)	175	12.5	8.7	16.3
Education, Training & Library (25)	1052	13.5	11.2	15.8
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media (27)	293	13.7	10.3	17.0
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (29)	955	13.1	11.4	14.8
Healthcare Support (31)	331	17.0	12.5	21.6
Protective Services (33)	224	13.6	10.5	16.6

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/surveillance/brfss/2014/asthma.html>

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Module 3: Tips for Reducing Risks From Environmental Exposures When Providing Homecare

Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others

Environmental Exposures in Homes

Potential Health and Safety Impacts of Risks

Activity 1 and 2

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Pest Infestations

Examples:

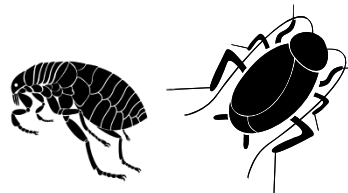
- Bedbugs, dust mites, lice, cockroaches rodents.

Potential Impacts:

- Infections.
- Respiratory issues.
- Bites.
- Itches, rashes.



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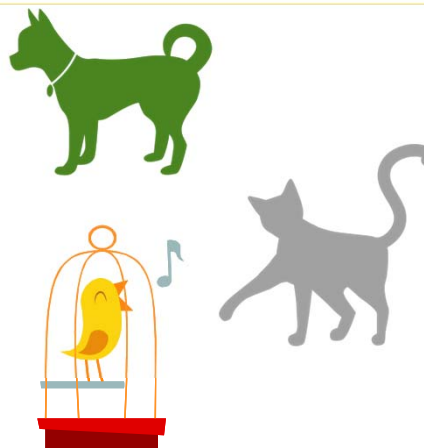
Risks, Impacts: Pets in the Home

Examples:

Dogs, cats, birds.

Potential Impacts:

- Allergic reactions.
- Respiratory issues.
- Attacks and bites.
- Scratches.
- Transmission of infections.
- Fear and anxiety.



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Risks and Impacts: Rubber Latex

Potential Impacts:

- Irritant contact dermatitis (sometimes allergic)
- Latex allergy with immediate hypersensitivity
 - Symptoms of serious reactions might include:
 - Runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes
 - Scratchy throat
 - Wheezing
 - Coughing
 - Difficulty breathing

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Risks and Impacts: Extreme Temperatures

Potential Impacts

- Chills
- Colds and flu
- Cold-induced asthma attack
- Fainting from extreme heat
- Stress and discomfort



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Risks and Impacts: Cleaning Agents and Chemicals

- Skin rashes, burns, and irritation.
- Red, itchy eyes.
- Breathing trouble.
 - *Wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath.*
- Headaches, dizziness.



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Risks and Impacts: Cigarette and Other Smoke

- Cough, sore throat
- Stress, discomfort
- Fire hazard
- Increased risk of:
 - Sinusitis and bronchitis
 - Cancer
 - Heart attack
 - Asthma aggravation



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Risks and Impact: Pollen

- Nasal congestion
- Sinus pressure, which may cause facial pain
- Runny nose
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Scratchy throat
- Cough



Photo: Pollen.com

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Risks and Impacts: Mold and Mildew in Homes

Risks:

- Dampness, especially in bathrooms and basements.
- Leaky or flooded homes.



Health Impacts:

- Allergic reactions.
- Ear, nose, and throat irritation.
- Asthmatic aggravation.

<http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/faqs.htm>

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Tips for Reducing Risks

Strategies for Staying Healthy and Safe Despite Risks

Activity 3

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Safety and Health Tips: Pest Infestations

- Use clean, plastic-lined pads under equipment, bags, purses, supplies.
- Take only necessary supplies and equipment into homes.
- Avoid setting purses, bags, or other items on carpets, floors, and furniture.
- Keep food and garbage in closed, tight-lidded containers.
- Use gloves and wash hands often.
- Change and wash clothes and hair after work.
- Wear disposable coveralls.



Illustrations by "Tinkstock"

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Safety and Health Tips: Dust Mites

- Suggest a dehumidifier or air conditioner to maintain relative humidity at about 50% or below.
- Wash bedding and blankets once a week in hot water to kill the mites.
- Use a damp mop or rag to remove dust. Never use a dry cloth since this just stirs up mite allergens .
- Use a vacuum cleaner with either a double-layered microfilter bag or a HEPA filter to trap allergens that pass through a vacuum's exhaust.
- Wear a mask while vacuuming to avoid inhaling allergens, and stay out of the vacuumed area for 20 minutes to allow any dust and allergens to settle after vacuuming.

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Safety and Health Tips: Pets in the Home

- Avoid contact with soiled litter cages.
- Dust often with a damp cloth.
- Use gloves if handling animal feces or urine.
- Wash hands often.
- If the pet seems threatening, make sure it is restrained before going in the home.
- Make sure animals are confined while working.

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Safety and Health Tips: Rubber Latex

For non-infectious material handling:

- Use non-latex gloves or get reduced-protein, powder-free latex gloves
- Avoid oil-based creams or lotions when using latex gloves (they may cause the gloves to break down).

For contact with infectious materials:

- Use vinyl, nitrile, or polymer gloves
- Contact social service agencies.

In General:

- Wash hands with mild soap and dry hands completely after using gloves
- Recognize symptoms of latex allergy and avoid direct contact and other latex-containing products if you develop symptoms of latex allergy

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Safety and Health Tips: Extreme Temperatures

- Speak with your client or contact your employer.
- If the outdoor environment is allergen-free, open the windows and use fans.
- See if you can change the thermostat while you are there.
- Contact social service agencies if you think your client is facing health impacts from extreme temperatures.



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Safety and Health Tips: Cleaning Agents

- Remove any air fresheners in the house (temporary fix for bad smells).
- Use less-harmful choices, choose fragrance-free cleaning products.
- Use cleaning gloves.
- Ventilate work areas.
- Do not spray mists—squirt onto sponge.
- Read labels and follow directions.
- Be careful with disinfectants – cleaning without disinfecting is often enough for many surfaces, like desktops, walls, and floors.
- Try microfiber cloths for dusting.
- Keep products in their original labeled containers.



Never mix bleach and ammonia!

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Safety and Health Tips: Cigarette and Other Smoke

Speak with client and discuss the following:

- Agree on a no-smoking policy during your work hours.
- Air cleaners and isolating smoking to just one room are **NOT** effective in protecting you and others in the home from second-hand smoke.
- Install smoke detectors.

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Safety and Health Tips: Pollen

- Save outside activities for late afternoon or after a heavy rain, when pollen levels are lower.
- Keep windows in the home closed to lower exposure to pollen. To keep cool, use air conditioners and avoid using window and attic fans.
- Be aware that pollen can also be transported indoors on people and pets.
- Dry your clothes in an automatic dryer rather than hanging them outside. Otherwise pollen can collect on clothing and be carried indoors.

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Health and Safety Tips: Mold and Mildew in Homes

- Identify moisture sources and eliminate, or tell client about leaks.
- Remove affected porous materials and furniture.
- Speak with supervisor regarding concerns.
- Use soap or a detergent solution and water to clean small areas of mold on walls or other hard surfaces.

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Tips for Staying Healthy and Safe on the Job

- Stay alert and get training (and never stop learning) about the four areas of risk:
 - Physical strains
 - Exposures
 - Stresses
 - Physical and emergency safety
- Speak up and listen constructively—out of respect for yourself and *with* respect for others. Talk with clients and supervisors to address concerns.

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More Health and Safety Strategies...

- Create your own action plan for safety (see manual, page 72).
- Use Standard Precautions—especially gloves and hand-washing—to avoid exposures.
- Follow tips for cleaning homes in healthy and safe ways.
- Bring up safety issues with clients and management immediately (as soon as possible).



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How to talk to each other about safety

What's wrong with this conversation?



"You can't keep your stuff all over the place. It's too cluttered—and dangerous!"



"It's MY house! You can't tell me what to do!"

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**Bring up
health and safety
issues as soon as
possible.**

Talk it Over!

- Plan the discussion.
- Be respectful—make a request, not a demand.

- Use “I” statements. Describe your health and safety concern, how it affects you, and what the impact might be on you and the client.
- Listen. See the issue from the client’s point of view.
- Consider several solutions beyond your first choice.
- Know your bottom line – the least you can accept while still protecting the health and safety of you and your client
- If you work for an agency, ask for help from your supervisor.




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Thanks for Your Great Participation

Additional Resources:

- Homecare workers' handbook: *Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others* .
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-103/pdf/2015-103.pdf>
- NIOSH Hazard Review: “Occupational Hazards and Home Health Care.”
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-125/pdfs/2010-125.pdf>
- *Home and Community Health Worker Handbook*, British Columbia, Canada, OHSAH.
<http://www.phsa.ca/NR/rdonlyres/6C69D638-8587-4096-A8AA-7D2B0141C3B2/59614/HandbookHomeandCommunityHealthcareWorkersHandbook.pdf>
- *Safety Manual for Homecare Workers*, Oregon Homecare Commission.
<http://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/de9062.pdf>



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