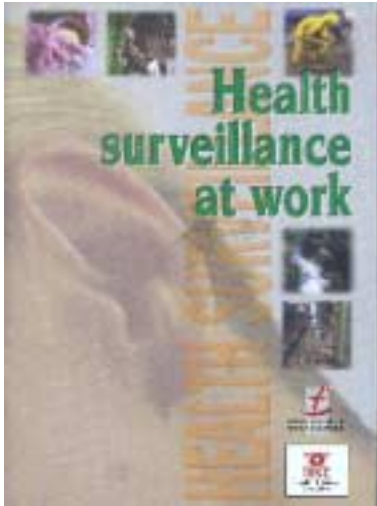


Occupational Health



Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers have a responsibility to protect the occupational health of employees by carrying out risk assessments on occupations where there is a risk of occupational disease or conditions. Where such risks are identified health surveillance should be carried out and control measures implemented to reduce the likelihood of the employee developing the condition.

The key Health and Safety Regulations are:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987
- The Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The most commonly encountered occupational health conditions are;

- Exposure to noise (noise induced hearing loss, tinnitus)
- Exposure to hazardous materials (toxic substances, asbestos, biological agents)
- Manual handling (upper limb disorders, back problems)
- Skin care (occupational dermatitis, skin cancers)
- Use of Display screen equipment (work related upper limb disorders, RSI)
- Stress and Mental Health

Illness and disease associated with work are less well recognised than accidents and injury. Health surveillance can detect at an early stage signs of disease or adverse health conditions, so that remedial action and improvements in controls can be instigated.

It is essential that possible causes of work related illnesses, conditions and diseases are identified so that remedial controls can be put in place. This process requires that both employees and their supervisors are aware of the employer's procedures in order that suspected occupational disorders are notified and treated.

Appropriate methods of health surveillance include self-reporting, health assessment by a qualified health professional and medical examination by a qualified practitioner.

Health surveillance must normally be undertaken with the informed consent of the individual and health records, which contain personal medical details, must be kept confidential.

Where a person is to be employed in an occupation where there is a risk of occupational disease or disorder, a pre-employment health questionnaire which is scrutinised by an occupational health professional, could prove useful. This identifies the state of their health upon starting with the employer and acts as a basis for future health surveillance.

Further assistance can be sought from the Employment Medical Advisory Service on 01256 404000