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# What is Occupational Health?



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Occupational Health (OH) is concerned with the effects of work on health and making sure all of our staff are fit for the work they do. Our specialist OH team plays a significant role in protecting you from work related ill health.

We offer competent and professional advice in line with national guidelines and standards. Many work related health issues are preventable and one of our roles is to advise your managers on their responsibilities. However you should also be aware that you have a duty to look after your own health in the workplace and you should seek advice from your line manager or OH if you have any concerns.

## What does an OH service do?

OH can offer specialist advice and support in a variety of areas such as:

- Assessing your health before you start work with the company or if you change roles during your employment
- Helping protect you from infectious diseases or other agents that you may be exposed to at work through vaccination or screening programmes
- Assessing health following significant workplace accidents
- Identifying health hazards at work and advising on control measures
- Assessing fitness to work following illness and advising on rehabilitation programmes to facilitate a return to work where indicated
- Assisting with national initiatives on health promotion issues
- Providing advice concerning stress management in the workplace
- Providing access to assessments regarding long term disability or ill health retirements
- Advising on adaptations required to facilitate an individual with a disability to work
- Provide access to counselling services

## Employment health screening

All new staff are required to complete a health questionnaire. This allows us to ensure that any pre-existing medical conditions are not aggravated by the work activity required by a particular job and to advise managers on any adaptations that may be needed to help you work.

You may also be invited to attend a health interview during the first few weeks of your employment, this will apply particularly to those who may be exposed to certain hazards in the course of their work. At this appointment we will be able to assess whether you need to be included in any work related health screening programmes or need to be offered any vaccinations in order to protect your health.

## OH Assessment

Occasionally you may be required to undergo an OH Assessment during employment. You can either refer yourself if you have any concerns about your health in relation to your work or sometimes your manager may ask us for advice, (with your consent). You will be assessed by a qualified OH nurse or doctor, who has knowledge of the workplace and will ensure appropriate management of any health issues. These could include:

- Early signs or symptoms of potential work related ill health
- Frequent short term absence
- Long term sickness absence
- Rehabilitation back to work following illness or injury
- Advice on work adaptations or work restrictions to facilitate someone with health problems at work
- Referral for counselling support services

This is a supportive service designed to protect both employees and employers in the prevention of work-related ill health and to ensure the work environment does not exacerbate general ill health. As you would expect, OH deal with all medical information in strict confidence and any advice to managers will only be regarding your fitness to work and any adjustments that might be necessary.

## Health Surveillance

The working environment can present staff with a variety of physical, chemical and biological hazards. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to carry out health and safety risk assessments and to introduce control measures to reduce any possible risks as far as practicable. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 identifies the need for health surveillance where a possible residual occupational risk to health remains despite control measures.

### The purpose of health surveillance is to:

- Advise employees about their fitness for work
- Advise employers about their employees' fitness to work
- Provide employees with objective information about their current state of health
- Alert employees to any early indications of work related disease and to advise them on whether or not they can continue working with the hazard
- Alert management to any particular problems which may require the provision of additional personal protective equipment
- Emphasise the need for employees to use available control measures and follow good working practices
- To identify trends in work related ill-health

### Health surveillance may include:

- Audiometry
- Spirometry
- Vision screening
- Biological monitoring (e.g. isocyanates)
- Skin inspections
- Hand-Arm Vibration assessments

## Health Supervision

Health Supervision is different to health surveillance. In this case it is not the work itself which impacts on health. Its purpose is to ensure individuals are fit for work and to identify any health conditions which could impact on an individual's safety or the safety of others. In many cases periodic medicals are required to ensure that any health concerns which could impact on safety can be identified and managed. Clients often group health surveillance and health supervision together when requesting services. Examples of health supervision include:

- FLT/ HGV drivers
- Confined space entry
- Working at heights
- Climbers/ Riggers medicals
- Working in extremes of temperature
- Travelling on Company Business

### Travelling on Company Business

Sometimes you may be required to travel abroad as part of your role. The risk of illness and injury to those travelling is well recognised. It is important that these risks are minimized and that any potential risks are identified prior to travel. Occupational Health offer pre-travel health consultations to provide advice and information to travellers to reduce these risks by promoting effective preventive measures, advising on relevant vaccinations and travel medications based on your travel itinerary.

## How to contact the team.

In the first instance please contact your local OH Adviser either  
by email  
or telephone

Further details can be found on the company's intranet page or  
through your local Human Resources co-ordinator / manager.