

BRITISH SAFETY COUNCIL

**BSC Level 1 Award in Health and Safety at Work**  
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# HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES



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## KEY POINT

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Using chemicals or other hazardous substances at work can put people's health at risk.

So the law requires employers to control exposure to hazardous substances to prevent ill-health.



## WHAT ARE HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES?

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There are a range of chemical and biological agents that can cause you harm. These can be:

- Products used in the workplace
- Products created by work activities, like welding fumes and wood dust
- Natural substances, like legionella and grain dust

These agents can be liquids, gases, vapours, mists, fumes, fibres, dusts, solids and micro-organisms.



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## WHAT SORT OF HARM DO THEY CAUSE?

Some of the common forms of harm include:

- Skin irritation
- Burns
- Skin disease
- Lung disease
- Cancer
- Infection



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## HOW DO I KNOW IF A SUBSTANCE I AM USING IS HAZARDOUS?

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Toxic/very toxic



Corrosive



Harmful to the environment



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## HOW DO I KNOW IF A SUBSTANCE I AM USING IS HAZARDOUS?

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Irritant/harmful



Highly flammable



Explosive



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## HOW DO HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES GET INTO THE BODY?

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There are a range of chemical and biological agents that can cause you harm. These can be:

- Inhalation – gases and fumes can be breathed in
- Ingestion – cleaning products can be swallowed
- Absorption – chemicals can soak through the skin
- Injection – sharp objects can puncture the skin



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## **WHAT DOES MY EMPLOYER HAVE TO DO TO CONTROL HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES?**

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- Carry out a risk assessment
- Provide and maintain control measures
- Provide health checks for employees exposed to certain hazardous substances, such as:
  - » Asbestos
  - » Lead
  - » Cement products
- Provide information, instruction and training



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## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

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- Make sure you know what substances you are using
- Follow any precautions put in place to protect you
- Report any equipment defects to your supervisor
- Use any PPE correctly
- Report any ill-health effects to your employer



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## GOOD HYGIENE TIPS

- Wash your hands with soap or cleanser and water
- Use towels or driers to dry them
- Use barrier creams to give added protection
- If you find any unusual blisters, rashes or other skin problems, report them
- Wash your hands before and after using the toilet
- Wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking

