

Introduction

This information leaflet is intended for people that work specifically with Chromium VI (hexavalent) compounds. These chemicals are often found in surface engineering processes but can also be found in other settings including businesses that work within the textile and construction industries, wood preservation and many others.

Exposure

There are several ways that these compounds can enter the body:

- Ingestion – from eating & drinking in production areas or with dirty hands, or by smoking without washing hands or removing gloves.
- Inhalation – by breathing in fumes and vapours from processes that use these chemicals.
- Absorption – chemicals may get into your body by being absorbed through contaminated skin.

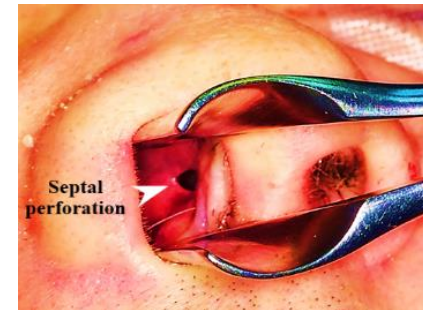
Health Effects

Exposure to hexavalent chromium compounds may cause several health problems including:

- Respiratory tract cancers (including lung cancer).
- Respiratory sensitisation (industrial asthma).
- Occupational Dermatitis.
- Skin burns and ulceration.
- Kidney damage.
- Erosion of the septum of the nose



Skin ulcers caused by exposure to plating solutions.



Perforation of the nasal septum from Chrome VI vapours

Your employer's obligations

Your employer must assess and control the risks to your health associated with these processes and will soon have to meet certain criteria to be able to use chrome VI compounds legally.

A robust induction and training programme for new starters along with a Health Surveillance programme for all exposed employees will almost certainly be a required part of your employer's plan to manage these risks.

The plan will also require environmental monitoring and other data gathering.

Health Surveillance

Due to the serious nature of some of the health effects associated with exposure to hexavalent chromium compounds, your employer should establish a programme of health checks to ensure that your health is not being affected. These assessments usually include:

- **Regular skin & nasal checks.** Visual inspection of skin on areas of the body most likely to become contaminated. Also, regular checks up nostrils to look for ulceration and erosion of the septum (central structure of the nose).
- **Respiratory assessment including spirometry.** Assessment of respiratory health useful for identifying industrial asthma and some other breathing disorders.
- **Biological Monitoring.** A urine sample is collected and sent to a laboratory to check how much chromium is in your system. Useful for measuring the effectiveness of exposure controls.
- **Other assessments such as HAVS & EMF.** Not directly related to exposure but other risk factors in some industries associated with the use of these sorts of products.

Further Information

Further information about working with Chromium compounds may be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg346.pdf>

A copy of this information leaflet can be downloaded from: <https://mohs.co.uk/>

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Hexavalent Chromium Compounds - A Guide for Exposed Workers



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