



Have you ever
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There are a variety of chemicals used by the agricultural sector to protect plants, animals and agricultural products from harmful pests, weeds and diseases. Many of these pesticides and other chemicals can have short and long term health effects for workers if not used safely.

For example:

- **Benzene in petrol/diesel exhaust emissions**
From plant and equipment that can be reduced by using emission control devices or changing to a safer fuel.
- **Organophosphates**
A group of pesticides that can be substituted with safer alternatives.
- **Chlordimeform**
A banned pesticide that was used in the cotton industry. Between 1978 and 1986 many workers in the cotton farms in NSW were regularly exposed to high levels of chlordimeform. Health effects from working with this chemical, including bladder cancer can occur up to 30 years after contact.

What symptoms could you experience?

If you have noticed a change in your health and think you could be at risk, speak to your employer or doctor about health monitoring and have the appropriate tests done. Symptoms and diseases may include:

- **Benzene in petrol**
Irritation of the skin, eyes and respiratory system, dizziness, headache, drowsiness, loss of consciousness, bone marrow disturbance and leukaemia.
- **Diesel exhaust emissions**
Nausea, loss of coordination, cardiovascular and respiratory disease and lung cancer.



- **Organophosphates**

Headaches, excessive sweating, slurred speech, blurred vision, weakness, behavioural effects like anxiety and restlessness and effects on the nervous system (polyneuropathy) which can affect the upper limbs.

- **Chlordimeform**

Urinary bladder irritation, abdominal and back pain, hot sensation all over, anorexia and bladder cancer.



Next steps

Prevention is better than cure. It is always better to be aware of the chemicals you are using and your current health situation. Follow these simple steps:

- Talk to your employer.
- Read the safety data sheets (SDS) for each chemical you use.
- Substitute with less hazardous chemicals where possible.
- Talk to your doctor about:
 - your past and current occupations
 - any changes you have noticed in your body
 - lifestyle – eg smoking can escalate symptoms
 - medical tests that may be required.

For more information, call **13 10 50** or visit workcover.nsw.gov.au



Disclaimer

This publication may contain work health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website legislation.nsw.gov.au

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice.

You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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