

How to complete a COSHH Assessment

This guidance refers to completion of the COSHH Assessment Form

1.0 Identification of substances Hazardous to Health

1.1 COSHH Regulations

COSHH applies to a wide range of substances and preparations (mixtures of two or more substances) which have the potential to cause harm to health if they are ingested, inhaled, or are absorbed by, or come into contact with, the skin, or other body membranes. Hazardous substances can occur in many forms, including solids, liquids, vapours, gases and fumes.

These will include:

- **Substances with a specific danger of being very toxic, toxic, harmful, corrosive or irritant.** Check the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) of the chemical product and [Table 1](#) of this document for further information.
- **Substances with Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs).** For further information check document EH40/2005 Workplace exposure limits. Containing the list of workplace exposure limits for use with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (as amended). EH40 (Third Edition), HSE <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/eh40.pdf>
- **Biological agent/biohazards:** Micro-organisms, cell culture or human endoparasite whether or not genetically modified which can cause infection, allergy, toxicity or otherwise create a hazard to human health. Check [Table 1](#) of this document for the symbol of biohazard but bear in mind that there are other sources of biological substances hazardous to health that do not have symbol such body fluids or sharp injuries. Reference should be made to NHS Lothian Policy “Working with Bloodborne Viruses”, National Infection Prevention and Control Manual and NHS Lothian “Clinical Sharps Devices” Policy.
- **Medicines:** while the intentional administration of medicines to patients is exempt from COSHH, the exposures of staff (or the unintended exposures of patients) to medicines that have harmful properties are covered by the regulations. Check NHS Lothian COSHH Guideline for further information.

1.2 Hazardous Substances NOT covered by COSHH Regulations

COSHH Regulations do not cover asbestos and lead, which have their own regulations, and substances that are hazardous to health because they are: radioactive, explosive, flammable or because they are a high or low temperature or a high pressure.

2.0 Tasks which use or create the substance and who may be harmed

Identify the work process(es) which use or can create the substance and identify who could be harmed (job positions and specific situations such as pregnant women or new mothers).

3.0 Hazard Information

Provide information from the SDS about the hazard statements (“H phrases”), hazard pictograms (see [Table 1](#) in this document), exposure limits if any and routes of entry (see [Table 2](#) in this document).

4.0 Can this substance be Eliminated or Substituted?

Can you use a less hazardous material or use it in a different form i.e. a paste rather than a powder?

5.0 Existing Precautions

What control measures have you already in place? For example – engineering controls such as Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV), instructions in place, PPE used, conditions during the process, well ventilated area, no patients in area at time of use, etc., training provided, reduction in the time of exposure.

6.0 Storage

Indicate how the substance should be stored. For Example: in locked cupboard, in flammable store, kept separate from other substances etc.

6.1 Disposal & Transport

Indicate how you would transport and dispose of the substance under normal usage (emergency spillages may be slightly different). Refer to Waste Management Policy

7.0 Is there a requirement for Health Surveillance?

Are there likely to be any specific health risks which require monitoring such a skin checks, spirometry tests for respiratory effectiveness etc? If so, detail them here. Contact the Occupational Health and Safety Department if support is needed.

8.0 Maintenance of Equipment

Do you have Local Exhaust Ventilation as a control like for example a fume cabinet? These are just examples of equipment which may need maintained and records kept. Follow requirements from the NHS Lothian COSHH Policy, Procedure and Guideline.

9.0 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) inc. Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE)

Do you need to use Personal Protective Equipment as a control? If so, be specific about what it is and detail the type, model and make here. Has the RPE fit testing conducted? Contact the Health and Safety Department if support is needed.

10.0 First Aid Measures (Action)

Detail what first aid measures may need to be taken following adverse contact with the substance. Refer to the NHS Lothian First Aid Policy to ensure requirements are met.

11.0 Emergency Plans, including spills procedures

Detail how you will deal with a spill in this section. Include any specific measures required in the Safety Data Sheet. Refer to NHS Lothian Waste Management Policy.

12.0 Other Additional Measures

Include any particular arrangements you have in this section.

13.0 Level of Risk

The **risk** is the chance, high, medium or low, that somebody could be harmed, by considering the likelihood and the consequence. Refer to the Risk matrix in line with the Risk Management Policy and the Risk Register Operational Procedure.

Grading of Risk – using the Risk Matrix, Table 3 of the Risk Register Operational Procedure.

Delete boxes not applicable OR circle box that is – as printing in black and white colour does not distinguish which is selected

Green – no issues or concerns, all controls in place

Yellow – all controls in place, but potential still exists for human error or failure to follow existing procedures and controls.

Orange – some controls in place, but could be improved as potential for harm still exists

Red – few, if any controls, serious concerns over practice, consideration to stop practice

14.0 Action Plan (Use this to record what further actions are required to reduce the risk)

- What further action(s) is necessary
- Who will do it? (names of individuals)
- Action by – when you are aiming for it to be achieved?
- Action completed – when it was completed?

15.0 Review your assessment and update if necessary. This must be annually reviewed and after a significant change to the task or environment occurs or as the consequence of an incident.

Reviewer – name.

Reasons for review – i.e. Incident in department/annual review.

Approved/Not approved by – delete as appropriate, with Managers signature.

Table 1: Symbols to identify substances hazardous to health











Symbol	Hazard	Symbol	Hazard
	Explosive (Symbol: exploding bomb)		Hazardous to the environment (Symbol: Dead tree and fish)
	Flammable (Symbol: flame)		Health hazard/Harmful/Irritant (Symbol: Exclamation mark)
	Oxidising (Symbol: flame over circle)		Serious health hazard (Symbol: health hazard)
	Corrosive (Symbol: Corrosion)		Gas under pressure (Symbol: Gas cylinder)
	Acute toxicity (Symbol: Skull and crossbones)		
An additional symbol to be considered is:			
Symbol	Meaning	Hazard	
	Bio Hazard	a pathogen, especially one used in or produced by biological research	

Table 2: Routes of exposure

Routes of exposure	How?
Inhalation	Exposure by breathing in
Percutaneous	Skin contact
	Exposure to the eyes
	Skin puncture/Injected
Ingestion	Exposure by swallowing