



Cognate Health
innovators in occupational health

WHAT IS HEALTH SURVEILLANCE



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The following
information is a
guide to Health
Surveillance

What is Health Surveillance

- Programme of ongoing employee health checks in a workplace
- Required by law for employees who are exposed to risks i.e. noise or vibration, solvents, fumes, dusts, biological agents; or work in compressed air
- Prior risk assessment of workplace needed to determine what health surveillance (checks) is required for employees
- Health surveillance programmes and risk assessments should be supported by Occupational Health provider
- Should not use health surveillance as a substitute for undertaking a risk assessment
- Not to be used as activity to monitor employee general health and wellbeing
- Does not substitute 'fitness to work' examinations i.e. fitness to dive, operate cranes, forklift trucks etc



Why Health Surveillance?

- Detecting ill-health effects at an early stage, so employers can introduce better controls to prevent worsening
- Providing data to help employers evaluate health risks
- Enabling employees to raise concerns about how work affects their health
- Highlighting lapses in workplace control measures
- Providing an opportunity to reinforce training and education of employees i.e. the use of protective equipment



When is Health Surveillance Necessary?

- there is a disease associated with the substance in use
- it is possible to detect the disease or adverse change and reduce the risk of further harm
- the conditions in the workplace make it likely that the disease will appear.

Health surveillance is a process; it may be a regular planned assessment of one or more aspects of a worker's health, for example: lung function or skin condition. However, it is not enough to simply carry out suitable tests, questionnaires or examinations

Employers must then have the results interpreted and take action to eliminate or further control exposure. It may be necessary to redeploy affected workers if necessary.

Health surveillance may need to be completed by an occupational health professional (doctor or nurse). If a GP offers the service, you need to be sure that they are competent in occupational medicine.

The clinical outcomes from health surveillance are personal. The service provider must interpret the results of health surveillance for each individual.

The service provider must supply general information for you to keep up-to-date health records. They may also be able to anonymise and group the information to highlight trends.