



# Trade Release

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## New guidance documents explain importance of testing in reducing, preventing worker exposure to respiratory hazards

WASHINGTON – The Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) developed two guidance documents, one for workers and one for employers, which describe the use of spirometry testing to help reduce and prevent worker exposure to respiratory hazards.

Spirometry is a common pulmonary function test that measures how well a person moves air in and out of the lungs. Workers who inhale some types of dusts, gases or other air contaminants can, over time, experience lung damage. The spirometry test may detect breathing problems or significant changes in a worker's lung function at an early stage. The information in these new guidance documents assists employers with identifying and eliminating hazardous workplace exposures and helping reduce or prevent the chances of workers developing lung disease.

The new [OSHA-NIOSH-produced Infosheet](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3415.html) (<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3415.html>) for employers clarifies what spirometry is, when it is needed, and critical elements that employers can use to evaluate the quality of spirometry services provided to their workers. The Infosheet also describes how monitoring workers' lung function over time can help individuals by identifying problems early and make the workplace safer by identifying when workplace respiratory hazards are causing problems that must be corrected. The companion document, [OSHA-NIOSH Worker Info](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3418.html) (<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3418.html>), explains to workers the importance of taking a spirometry test, what to do during the test, and their right to receive an explanation and copy of test results.

“Spirometry is the best available test for early detection of decreasing or abnormal lung function,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. “Our joint effort with NIOSH in developing these products will help broaden outreach and enhance knowledge of preventive measures aimed at protecting worker health and safety.”

“We are pleased to join with OSHA in emphasizing the important role of spirometry in preventing costly, debilitating, and potentially fatal occupational lung diseases,” said NIOSH Director John Howard, M.D. “These tests are a vital component of health and safety programs in workplaces where workers may be exposed to hazardous airborne contaminants.”

OSHA also recommends spirometry testing for workers exposed to diacetyl and diacetyl substitutes. The agency recently issued a Safety and Health Information Bulletin on [Occupational Exposure to Flavoring Substances: Health Effects and Hazard Controls](http://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib10142010.html) (<http://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib10142010.html>) and a companion [Worker Alert on Diacetyl and Substitutes](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/flavoringlung/diacetyl_worker_alert.html) ([https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/flavoringlung/diacetyl\\_worker\\_alert.html](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/flavoringlung/diacetyl_worker_alert.html)). These

documents recommend that employers include spirometry testing in their medical surveillance programs to identify workers experiencing adverse health effects from exposure to flavorings, including food flavorings containing diacetyl.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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