

Allergic rhinitis caused by the inhalation of substances consistently recognised as causing allergies and inherent to the type of the work

Definition of causal agent

Occupational allergic rhinitis is a disease characterised by allergic inflammation in the nasal mucosa, with nasal congestion, rhinorrhea and sneezing due to causes and conditions attributable to a particular occupational environment. Specifically it is induced by workplace exposure to an airborne dust, gas, vapour or fume. Occupational rhinitis may precede occupational asthma, especially when caused by a high molecular mass allergen.

Main occupational uses and sources of exposure:

The causative agents for occupational allergic rhinitis are similar to those for occupational asthma (See Annex I entry nr. 304.06 on *Allergic asthmas caused by the inhalation of substances consistently recognised as causing allergies and inherent to the type of work*).

Diagnostic criteria

The diagnosis of occupational rhinitis requires demonstration of a clear relationship between exposure to the causal agent and clinical changes.

History:

- workplace exposure to a substance known to trigger occupational rhinitis
- a pattern of symptoms in direct relation to the occupational exposure
- recurrence of symptoms following re-exposure to the same agent

Examination:

Anterior rhinoscopy may show mucosal inflammation and oedema

Investigations:

For agents that provoke specific IgE antibodies, skin-prick or serological testing can be used to assess sensitization. Numerous occupational allergens are not standardised and information on the sensitivity and specificity of skin-prick or serological tests is not always available. Rhinomanometric measurements of nasal airflow and allergen specific nasal provocation testing may be used to support a diagnosis of occupational rhinitis.

Exposure criteria are similar to those of allergic occupational asthma (in Annex I entry nr. 304.06 on *Allergic asthmas caused by the inhalation of substances consistently recognised as causing allergies and inherent to the type of work*).