

## Additional information

You or your doctor can get further information from the Employment Medical Advisory Service at any HSE area office.

This pocket card contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

This card is available in priced packs (20 cards and two employers' guides INDG198) from HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 0987 1. Single copies of both publications are also available free from HSE Books.

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# Working with sewage

# The health hazards

A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES



## Are you at risk?

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Workers whose activities bring them into contact with sewage and sewage products are at risk of contracting a work-related illness.

The majority of illnesses are relatively mild cases of gastroenteritis, but potentially fatal diseases, such as leptospirosis (Weil's disease) and hepatitis, are also reported to HSE.

However, not all cases are reported because people often fail to recognise the link between illness and work.

## How to protect yourself

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- Make sure that you understand the risks to health and the ways in which you can pick up infections.

- Use safe systems of work and wear the protective equipment that is provided.
- Report damaged equipment and get it replaced.
- Avoid becoming contaminated with sewage.
- Avoid breathing in sewage dust or spray.
- Do not touch your face or smoke, eat or drink, unless you have washed your hands and face thoroughly with soap and water.
- Cleanse all exposed wounds, however small, and cover with a sterile waterproof dressing.
- Change out of contaminated clothing before eating, drinking or smoking.
- If you suffer from a skin problem, seek medical advice before working with sewage.

- Clean contaminated equipment on site. Do not take contaminated clothing home for washing. Your employer should deal with this.

## If you become ill

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- Consult your doctor in the event of flu-like illness or fever, particularly where associated with severe headache and skin infections. Show your pocket card to the doctor.
- Seek medical advice if there are persistent chest symptoms, particularly if consistent with asthma or alveolitis (inflammation of the lung).
- Report any of the above illnesses to your employer, who should investigate any work-related link.