

3. PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- ❖ General environmental conditions:
 - ✓ Ensure adequate ventilation to reduce heat stress as well as odors, gases and vapors
 - ✓ Comfortable temperature
 - ✓ Adequate illumination
 - ❖ Hand washing is extremely important to reduce infections. Make sure to use skin moisturizers liberally to prevent your skin from drying
 - ❖ Follow established infection control techniques and procedures
 - ❖ Handle sharp objects with extreme care- follow appropriate procedures in handling and disposing of sharps
 - ❖ Proper manual handling / correct lifting techniques of patients-use lifting aids if available
 - ❖ Always use the correct personal protective equipment for the task and routinely use barriers e.g. gloves, gowns and eye protection
- ❖ Request for powder free latex gloves or non-latex gloves if sensitive to natural rubber latex
 - ❖ Wear shoes designed for nurses with non slip soles
 - ❖ Follow a recommended shiftwork pattern
 - ❖ Keep all hallways and passages clear
 - ❖ Wear a radiation dosimeter when exposed to radiation
 - ❖ Consult psychologist on how to deal with mental exhaustion and burnout
 - ❖ Undergo health surveillance to identify ill health effects early and appropriate vaccinations



**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES**

WORKING IN THE NURSING PROFESSION



*FACTS ON THE HEALTH
AND SAFETY RISKS*

1. INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Nurses work in a wide variety of health care settings e.g. operating theatres, accident and emergencies departments, clinics, community based, and hence duties varies
- ❖ Because each workplace is unique, hence there is a multitude of health and safety hazards which can be encountered

2. HEALTH AND SAFETY HAZARDS

❖ Physical Hazards

- Radiation e.g. x-rays from mobile x-ray machines in wards
- Exposure to lasers

❖ Biological hazards

- Contagious and infectious diseases that can be transmitted through:
 - Air e.g. tuberculosis
 - Blood-borne e.g. Hepatitis B and C, HIV
- Risk of exposure to multidrug resistant organisms such as MDR-TB, MRSA

❖ Chemical Hazards

- Skin diseases due to chemical irritants and/or allergens e.g. latex gloves, use of disinfectants for cleaning. It can also arise due to frequent hand washing
- Acute poisoning due to release or spillage of chemical agent
- Chronic health problems associated with handling or exposure to:
 - Drugs or medications e.g. handling anti-neoplastic drugs
 - Anesthetic gases e.g. ethylene oxide
 - Sterilizing agents e.g. glutaraldehyde

❖ Ergonomic Hazards

- Upper limb disorders and back problems e.g. strains, sprains, pain, numbness, swelling and tingling in the hands, low back pain
- Can be caused by lifting patients or prolonged standing or overexertion

❖ Psychosocial Hazards

- Stress and fatigue due to intense activity or traumatic events e.g. death of patient
- Shiftwork, nightwork and extended work days
- Physical violence or verbal abuse especially when working alone e.g. from patients with mental disturbances, traumatized families

❖ Safety Hazards

- Needleprick injuries, cuts and lacerations (e.g. from surgical knives)
- Injuries due to slips, trips and falls e.g. wet floor, poor housekeeping.
- Burns from hot sterilizing equipments
- Electrocution from faulty electrical equipment
- Injuries to foot from falling objects