



5 Common Jobs with High Levels of Exposure to Toxins

When you think of dangerous jobs, reality TV shows like the Discovery Channel's *Deadliest Catch* or *Ice Road Truckers* might leap to mind. It's certainly true that commercial fishing and trucking are among the top 25 jobs with the highest injury and fatality rates in the United States (logging remains number one). Yet although they aren't pitting themselves against the elements, employees in several common career sectors face insidious health threats posed not by towering waves or blizzards but by silent toxins in their workplace.

At first glance, none of these industries appear particularly threatening. Some we associate with beauty, like hair and nail salons; others, like dental hygienists, are health-related. Construction workers and mechanics are in the business of helping people with essential housing and transportation needs. All, however, surround their practitioners with a toxic soup of chemicals that over time have the potential to compromise immune function, disrupt our bodies' communication systems and damage our health.

Nail Salon Workers

According to an old French saying, 'You have to suffer to be beautiful.' In the nail salon world, the reverse is true. Health risks and exposure to toxins falls on those who are helping others enhance their appearance, not the other way around. A brief run-down of the chemicals involved in nail care is disturbing: Dibutyl Phthalate, used in nail polish, formaldehyde and methylene glycol, also found in nail polish and nail hardeners, toluene, used in nail glue, and Methyl Methacrylate (MMA), found in artificial nails.,

Collectively, these substances create short-term effects like nausea, dizziness, eye and skin irritation, breathing problems, coughing, wheezing, headaches and confusion. Over time, they can lead to birth defects, cancer, liver damage, kidney damage, asthma, loss of smell and miscarriages.

Auto Mechanics

Walk into any auto mechanic's shop and the first thing that usually hits you is the smell: a pervasive odor of exhaust, gasoline, engine oil and other automotive fluids. Each substance is a necessary tool of the trade yet prolonged and chronic exposure can have negative impacts.



A study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that auto mechanics had higher levels of lead, cadmium, chromium, zinc and copper in their systems than individuals who hadn't been exposed.

Benzene (in gasoline) and asbestos used in brake linings and clutch configurations can also cause health problems. Along with tetrachloroethylene ('perc'), a grease solvent, these compounds have been linked to esophageal, kidney, bladder and cervical cancers.

Dental Hygienists and Dentists

As the main assistants for everything from general check-ups to complex procedures, dental hygienists are exposed to a variety of hazards. The first is radiation from x-rays; despite being exposed only indirectly, hygienists are in danger of the cumulative effects of radiation, which has been linked to cancer.

Chemicals housed in or emitted by dental composites, mercury or dental processing machines also pose a threat, along with anesthetics like nitrous oxide. An NIH review of mercury exposure and the health of dental personnel looked at all studies on the topic between 2002 and 2015. Among the reviewed findings, several studies noted a significant association between the number of amalgam fillings done per day with reports of respiratory disorders, irregular pulse, hand tremors, spasms of the upper extremities, moodiness, nervousness, anxiety, insomnia, memory deficits and depression among dentists than in members of the control groups.

Hair Stylists

Even if you ever saw the Chris Rock documentary *Good Hair*, you probably know that many of the ingredients in hair salons are not good for us, especially those used in hair dyes. These include ammonia, a respiratory and asthma irritant and potential endocrine system disruptor, meaning it can confuse the body's hormone signaling system.

Then there's P-phenylenediamine, the main ingredient in many dyes. It's derived from coal-tar and has been linked to birth defects, skin irritation, and liver and blood toxicity. Other chemical groups in hair dyes are known to put stylists at a higher risk of bladder cancer as well as cancer of the larynx and lungs. The key once again is prolonged exposure, which stylists are subject to.



Construction Workers

Like auto mechanics, construction workers are regularly exposed to a mix of chemicals resulting from small particles stirred up in the process of sanding, installing drywall, tearing down old buildings or drilling. In older homes, asbestos is a constant threat, putting crew members at an increased risk of lung cancer and mesothelioma.

Paint supplies, degreasing products, furniture wax, glues and lubricants often include benzene, which has been linked to bladder, liver and lung cancers. Even simple wood dust can cause problems ranging from allergic reactions and asthma to nasal and sinus cavity cancer.

Removing Heavy Metals and Environmental Toxins

If you practice one of these professions, such news is cause for concern. In the short-term there are many precautions you can take at work to protect yourself and minimize the impact of these environmental toxins. Fortunately, it is also possible to gently and safely remove heavy metals over time if you have been exposed. [Learn more about how soluble zeolite works to remove toxins.](#)

Reference

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