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Building Trades National Medical Screening Program

P.O. Box 900960 ▪ Seattle, WA 98109 ▪ 1-800-866-9663

CHROMIUM

What is chromium?

Chromium is a metal used to produce steel alloys. Chromium compounds are used in many products, including pigments, dyes, and adhesives. Chromium is also found in Portland cement.

Chromium is highly toxic. Workers can become ill from breathing in chromium dust or *fume*. Fume is made of tiny solid particles that get into the air when chromium is heated. Chromium can cause lung cancer, even in people who do not smoke. Chromium can damage the kidneys, and it can cause skin sores and rashes.

Construction workers may breathe in chromium during welding or sandblasting on stainless steel structures or surfaces containing old paint. Workers can get chromium on their skin from handling Portland cement.

What is the purpose of this exam?

Your screening interview showed that you may have been exposed to chromium at work. You are being examined to look for health problems caused by chromium exposure. This exam will help us decide whether you need treatment or more tests.

What are we looking for?

We are looking for signs of kidney damage and skin problems caused by chromium. You will receive blood tests that look for changes in kidney function, which may be caused by chromium.

The doctor will examine your skin for signs of *allergic dermatitis*, a type of skin rash. You can become allergic to chromium in the same way that some people are allergic to poison ivy. *Chromium-sensitized* people get a severe rash if their skin touches even a tiny amount of chromium.

You will receive a letter summarizing your exam and photocopies of your test results. All your results are confidential, as defined in your Consent Statement.

What if my test results are positive?

Based on your history and these exam results, you may be referred to your doctor or a specialist. To know for sure if a rash is caused by a chromium allergy, a skin specialist can perform patch testing on your skin. If you are found to have an allergy to chromium, you may need special gloves and medication to treat it.

What other steps should I take?

If you still work around chromium, follow all available precautions and use the protective equipment provided to you. Practice good personal hygiene, such as washing your hands thoroughly, to prevent chromium from getting on your skin, clothing, or food.

Stop smoking!! Like chromium, smoking damages the lungs and causes lung cancer.

Get regular medical check-ups.

What if I have more questions?

If you have questions after this exam, ask your personal physician. Or call our toll-free number at 1-800-866-9663. We will refer you to a professional who can answer your questions.