



# What you need to know about **beryllium**

A recent study\* found workers exposed to beryllium have a higher risk of:

- Lung Cancer
- Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD)
- Urinary Tract Cancer
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Cor Pulmonale (“Right-sided heart failure”)
- Nervous System Cancers

Though the study looked at workers exposed before 1970, there are health implications for those who currently work with beryllium. The study found the risk for lung cancer was increased at the allowable level of exposure to beryllium,  $2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  per eight hour work shift. There is also a known risk of CBD and beryllium sensitization at this level. Currently, OSHA is evaluating its exposure limit for beryllium in the workplace.

## **What is beryllium?**

Beryllium is a light-weight metal that has been linked to certain health problems.

## **How can I be exposed to beryllium?**

Beryllium dust and fumes can be breathed-in. Beryllium dust or liquid can also absorb through skin. Exposure can occur even if you do not work directly with or near beryllium. There are no immediate symptoms of exposure, so you may be exposed and not know it.

## **If you work around beryllium, you should:**

**Tell your doctor.** Your doctor should know that you work in a beryllium processing plant and work with materials that may be hazardous to your health. Report any unusual or persistent symptoms.

**Protect yourself.** To learn how, visit [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2011-107/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2011-107/) to get a copy of the NIOSH Alert: “Preventing Sensitization and Disease from Beryllium Exposure” Publication No. 2011-107 or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

**Protect your family.** Change clothes and shoes before leaving work to prevent beryllium dust from being tracked into your home.

If you would like more information, please contact the CDC by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO.



\*The study was completed in 2010 by researchers at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To learn more about NIOSH, visit: [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh). To learn more about the study visit [www.cdc.gov/niosh/pgms/worknotify/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/pgms/worknotify/).