

Form template for the identification and assessment of the hazards related to biological agents in the workplace

The form template is intended to be used for identifying and assessing the risks of biological agents in the workplace.

If necessary, the employer must use occupational health care or other experts in the field to investigate or assess biological hazards if the employer does not have the sufficient expertise.

Download form template

- > [Download form template from the website of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of Finland Tyosuojelu.fi: Identification and assessment of the risks of biological agents in the workplace \(docx\)](#)



Instructions for completing the form

At the top of the form, fill in the basic information about the workplace: Sector, names of the workplace and the department/unit.

Exposure agent

Source of exposure

The actions and events that can lead to exposure to the biological agent at the workplace must be listed on the source of exposure.

Biological agent

The biological agent at a workplace (bacteria, virus, parasite or fungus) must be identified. If necessary, the employer must use occupational health care or other experts in the field to identify the biological agent, if the employer themselves does not have the sufficient expertise.

Classification/hazard class

The biological agent identified in the workplace will be classified in Group according to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Decree on the classification of biological agents (748/2020). There are four groups (Groups 1–4), depending on the hazard they pose, as follows:

- **A biological agent in Group 1** is unlikely to cause a disease to humans or a risk to the health of an employee.
- **A biological agent in Group 2** may cause a disease to humans that can be treated, and for which an effective prevention method is usually available and which is not likely to spread to the population, but may pose a risk to the health of the worker.
- **A biological agent in Group 3** may cause a severe disease to humans that can be treated, and for which an effective prevention method is usually available and which can spread to the population and poses a risk to the health of the worker.
- **A biological agent in Group 4** will cause a serious illness in humans for which there is generally no effective treatment or prevention method, and which is highly likely to spread to the population and poses a serious risk to the health of the worker.

If the workplace is not aware of which group the biological agent should be classified into, it should be classified in the highest of the possible groups.

Replacement of biological agent possible (yes/no)

The workplace must determine whether it is possible to replace the biological agent with a biological agent that is not hazardous under the conditions of use or that is less hazardous to health. In addition, the workplace must also determine whether the working method of the workplace could be changed so that exposure to a biological agent can be avoided.

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Instructions for completing the form

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Exposure

Description of work phase during which exposure may occur (hazards)

A workplace must identify and make a record of the work phases during which exposure to a biological agent is possible. The workplace can use near miss incidents at the workplace, possible occupational accidents and employees' views of the work phases in question to help in determining this.

Description of exposure (likelihood, nature, quantity, duration)

The employer must take into account the likelihood, nature, quantity and duration of exposure when assessing the risks of biological agents.

The likelihood assessment uses a scale: Unlikely, possible, probable.

In the section concerning the nature of the exposure, describe the method of exposure through the skin, eyes or mucous membranes, by inhalation or by swallowing.

The quantity and duration of exposure describe the exposure frequency and exposure time.

Exposed workers

A record must be kept of the workers/groups of workers who may be exposed to a biological agent in their work. The employer must limit the number of people exposed or potentially exposed to a minimum. In particular, attention must be paid to pregnant women and other special groups in this regard.

Implemented protection measures and monitoring (working methods, orientation, technical prevention measures, personal protection, vaccinations, etc.)

In the section on working methods, describe the working methods and control measures used at the workplace to mitigate or minimise exposure to the biological agent and its spread.

In the section on orientation, describe the content of the orientation provided to employees, for example, on the health hazards of exposure to biological agents and the mitigation of exposure, the use, maintenance and storage of protective equipment and clothing and how to take action in hazardous situations.

In the section on personal protection describe the personal protective equipment used by employees.

In the section on vaccinations, specify whether there is an effective vaccination against biological exposure and whether vaccinations have been administered to workers potentially exposed to the biological agent. [See the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Decree on the classification of biological agents \(748/2020\) \(in Finnish\)](#).

Conclusions

Health risk caused by exposure

The extent of the health risk caused by the biological agent to employees in different tasks is assessed based on the information collected above. The scale for the assessment can be for example insignificant, minor, moderate, significant, intolerable. In addition, the need for additional measures will be assessed based on health risks.

Required additional measures

A record must be kept on necessary additional measures, timetables for measures and responsible persons.

As a rule, the employer should eliminate the hazards and risks caused by biological agents or, if they cannot be eliminated, reduce exposure to them to a minimum. The employer must

- limit the number of workers exposed or potentially exposed to a minimum by means such as implementing correct working methods and isolation measures.
- plan working methods and technical control measures to mitigate or minimise the spread of biological agents.
- provide personal protective equipment to employees.
- draw up a plan to mitigate accidents involving biological agents.
- ensure safe collection, storage and disposal of waste containing biological agents.
- ensure procedures for safe handling and transport of biological agents within the workplace.

The form template and instructions have been prepared by: Divisions of Occupational Safety and Health at the Regional State Administrative Agency/ National Project Group on Biological Agents 20 Jan 2021.