

Occupational Health Nurse interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for occupational health nurse roles typically mix clinical knowledge with case management and workplace legislation. You will likely meet a nursing manager, a safety lead or an HR representative.

- **Process:** Questions about how you run health surveillance, pre-employment medicals or return-to-work plans step by step.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for examples of how you have handled an injury case, a difficult worker or a conflict with management.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical workplace situations that test your judgement under pressure, such as a worker refusing a medical or a site outbreak.
- **Technical:** Questions on audiometry, spirometry, immunisation, infection control and interpreting health data.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions on WHS legislation, privacy, AHPRA standards and your duty of care.

The interview usually starts with a general conversation about your registration and experience. Then the panel moves through process and technical questions, often followed by behavioural and scenario-based questions. You may be asked to complete a short written or practical exercise. Finally, you get time to ask questions about the workplace health program.

1. Walk me through how you conduct a pre-employment medical assessment.

Why they ask

This shows whether you understand the purpose of pre-employment checks and can follow a consistent, legally sound process.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through: start with the referral and consent, then history, examination, baseline tests such as audiometry or spirometry, and finish with fitness-for-work recommendation and record keeping.

Example answer

"I start by checking the job demands and any specific hazards. Then I confirm the worker understands the purpose and obtain consent. I take a detailed medical and occupational history, including previous exposures and current medications. I perform a physical examination relevant to the role, such as musculoskeletal checks for manual handling roles. If needed, I conduct baseline audiometry or spirometry. I document everything in Cority or SAP EHS and write a clear fitness-for-work recommendation. If I find something that needs follow-up, I refer to a GP or specialist and communicate with the employer only on work capacity, not diagnosis."

2. Tell me about a time you managed a complex return-to-work case.

Why they ask

Return to work is a core part of the role, and complex cases test your coordination, communication and persistence.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation and the worker's injury, the task of building a plan, the actions you took with the worker, employer and GP, and the result in terms of recovery and return to duties.

Example answer

"A fitter at a mine site had a back injury and was off work for several weeks. The site was worried about lost time and the worker was anxious about returning. I arranged a case conference with the worker, their GP and the supervisor. We identified suitable duties like toolbox talks and light maintenance. I checked in weekly and adjusted the plan as their capacity improved. After six weeks they returned to full duties, and the supervisor later told me the early contact made a real difference."

3. A worker refuses to attend a health surveillance appointment. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

This tests your ability to balance worker rights, legal obligations and workplace relationships.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: clarify the reason for refusal, explain the legal and safety context, involve the right people, and escalate only if necessary.

Example answer

"First I would talk with the worker privately to understand why they are refusing. It might be fear, a language barrier or a scheduling issue. I would explain that health surveillance is a legal requirement for their role and that it is about protecting them, not catching them out. I would offer to reschedule or address any concerns. If they still refuse, I would document the conversation and let the supervisor or safety manager know, because the worker may need to be moved off duties that require surveillance. I would keep it respectful and focus on finding a workable solution."

4. What is your experience with audiometry and spirometry testing?

Why they ask

These are core tools for occupational health nurses, especially in mining and manufacturing.

How to structure your answer

Technical demonstration: describe your training, how you perform the tests, how you ensure quality, and how you interpret and escalate results.

Example answer

"I have completed accredited training in audiometry and spirometry. I follow the standards for each test, including calibration checks and correct technique. For audiometry, I test in a quiet booth and compare results to baseline. For spirometry, I coach the worker to ensure a good effort and repeat if needed. I review results against reference values and history. If I see a significant shift, I flag it for review by a doctor and discuss with the worker. I record everything in the health records system and schedule follow-up as required."

5. How do you ensure your health promotion programs actually change behaviour?

Why they ask

Health promotion is part of the role and employers want to know you can deliver more than posters.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through: assess needs, design with the workforce, deliver, and measure using simple indicators like participation or self-reported change.

Example answer

"I start by looking at the health data and talking to workers to find out what issues matter. For example, if fatigue is a problem, I might run toolbox sessions at shift change rather than a lunchtime seminar. I use practical language and real examples from the site. After the program, I follow up with a short survey or a pulse check, and I report back on participation and any changes in incidents or sick leave. If something is not working, I adjust it and try again."

6. What would you do if you suspected an occupational illness outbreak, such as several workers reporting similar respiratory symptoms?

Why they ask

This tests your ability to act quickly and safely, and to escalate appropriately.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: protect workers first, gather information, notify the right people, and support investigation.

Example answer

"My first priority is worker safety. I would advise affected workers to seek medical attention and isolate the area if there is an ongoing exposure. I would report to the site safety manager and the employer's health and safety representative immediately. I would review health records and exposure data to see if there is a pattern. I would also notify the relevant public health unit if required. I would support a formal investigation and help communicate with workers, keeping confidentiality. The goal is to stop further harm and learn from what happened."