

Silica Dust Exposure

What is Silicosis?

Silicosis is a condition caused by inhaling too much silica over a long period of time. Silica is highly common, crystal-like mineral found in sand, rock, and quartz. Silica can have deadly consequences for people who work with stone, concrete, glass, or other forms of rock.

Silica dust particles act as tiny blades on the lungs. These particles create small cuts that can scar the lung tissue when inhaled through the nose or mouth. Scarred lungs do not open and close as well, making breathing more difficult. Any level of silica exposure can result in silicosis.

There are three types of silicosis:

- **Acute silicosis** forms a few weeks or months after high levels of silica exposure. This condition progresses rapidly.
- **Accelerated silicosis** comes on a number of years after exposure.
- **Chronic silicosis** occurs 10 years or more after silica exposure. Even low exposure levels can cause chronic silicosis.

Symptoms of Silicosis

Silicosis is a progressive condition, meaning it gets worse over time. Symptoms may start out as an intense cough, shortness of breath, or weakness. Other possible symptoms include:

- Chest pain
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Weight loss
- Respiratory failure

Having silicosis increases your risk for respiratory infections, including tuberculosis. You should seek medical attention if you suspect you have silicosis.

Preventing Health Problems from Silica

- Use vacuums or water to reduce or eliminate the dust at the source, before it becomes airborne. When these controls are not enough, use respiratory protection. Routinely maintain dust control systems to keep them in good working order.
- Do not use sand or other substances containing more than 1% crystalline silica as abrasive blasting materials. Substitute less hazardous materials.
- Wear disposable or washable work clothes and shower if facilities are available. Vacuum the dust from your clothes and change into clean clothing before leaving the work site. **Do not brush or blow the dust off! Do not bring dust home!**
- Avoid eating, drinking and smoking in areas where silica dust is present. Wash your hands and face outside of dusty areas before performing any of these activities.

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Please read the handout carefully. Answer the following questions and give this page back to the person providing the toolbox talk.

Q: Name two symptoms of silicosis?

A:

A:

Q: What should you do to control dust and minimise exposure?

A: I have read and understood the

information set out above:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

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