



Learn about the dangers of breathing silica dust

Crystalline silica is found in concrete, masonry, sandstone, and most rock. The cutting, breaking, crushing, drilling, grinding, or abrasive blasting of these materials without proper controls will produce fine silica dust. When silica dust builds up in your lungs, you are at risk of developing a serious and irreversible lung disease called silicosis.

Silicosis

Silicosis is a disease caused by the prolonged breathing of crystalline silica dust. The fine particles are deposited in the lungs, causing thickening and scarring of the lung tissue. Crystalline silica exposure has also been linked to lung cancer.

A worker may develop any of three types of silicosis, depending on the concentrations of silica dust and the duration of exposure:

- **Chronic silicosis:** develops after 10 or more years of exposure to crystalline silica at relatively low concentrations
- **Accelerated silicosis:** develops 5 to 10 years after initial exposure to crystalline silica at high concentrations
- **Acute silicosis:** symptoms develop within a few weeks, or 4 to 5 years, after exposure to very high concentrations of crystalline silica

Symptoms of silicosis

Initially, workers with silicosis may have no symptoms; however, as the disease progresses a worker may experience:

- Shortness of breath
- Severe cough
- Weakness

These symptoms can worsen over time and lead to death.

Preventing exposure

If you are exposed to silica dust, learn about the control methods that can protect you. Talk to your supervisor and ask how you will be protected when performing dusty work. You should also talk to your family doctor, who can recommend medical monitoring for silicosis.



Healthy lung



Silicosis lung