

# Silicosis: what workers need to know



## Silicosis is a dangerous, but preventable disease.

Silicosis is an incurable lung disease caused by breathing in crystalline silica dust.

Crystalline silica dust is created from materials containing silica.

Breathing in silica dust for extended periods of time can cause permanent lung damage and possibly death.



## Some jobs and tasks put people at risk for silicosis.

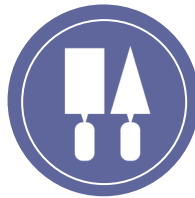
Concrete, stone, mortar, and asphalt are a few materials that contain crystalline silica.

Drilling, grinding, sanding, and chipping these materials can create silica dust, increasing the risk of developing silicosis.

## Industries with known risk:



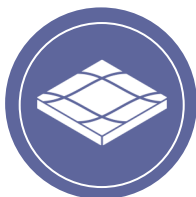
Construction



Masonry



Foundries



Stone fabrication



Mining



Dentistry

## Minimize your exposure to silica dust when working with materials containing silica:

- Use available dust control equipment and systems such as local exhaust ventilation systems equipped with high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration, machinery with water spraying features, and hand tools with HEPA equipped vacuum dust shrouds.
- Use safe work practices such as wet methods that use water sprays to control dust when cutting, and vacuums equipped with HEPA filtration when cleaning. Avoid dry sweeping, dry cutting, and using compressed air.
- Wear a respirator with dust protection features, such as half and full face air purifying respirators, or N95 masks. Respirators should be used with engineering controls and safe work practices.
- Avoid eating or drinking in dusty areas.
- Shower and/or change into clean clothing before leaving the worksite to avoid contaminating cars, homes, and other work areas.
- Participate in any medical monitoring, air monitoring, or training programs offered by your employer.

### Know the symptoms of silicosis.

Silicosis can increase the risk of contracting other lung diseases, such as lung cancer and tuberculosis. It is crucial to recognize symptoms early.



Cough



Shortness of breath



Fatigue



Chest pain

### Contact your doctor if you have silicosis symptoms.

#### Expect to:

- Share details about your work history.
- Complete a physical examination.
- Participate in diagnostic tests such as chest X-rays and lung function tests.

#### For more information visit:

[Wisconsin DHS Occupational Lung Disease webpage](#)

[OSHA Crystalline Silica topic page](#)

[CDC Silica topic page](#)

