

Silicosis: Occupational lung disease

Silicosis is an often fatal lung disease caused by breathing dust containing crystalline silica particles, a basic component of sand and granite. There is no cure for silicosis, and treatment options are limited. However, the condition can be prevented if measures are taken to reduce exposure.

Inhaling the dust can cause scar tissue to form in the lungs that reduces the lungs' ability to extract oxygen from the air.

Symptoms

Continued exposure:

- Shortness of breath
- Fever
- Bluish skin at the ear lobes or lips

As the disease progresses:

- Fatigue
- Extreme shortness of breath
- Loss of appetite
- Chest pain
- Respiratory failure

At-risk occupations

- Construction
- Mining
- Sandblasting
- Masonry
- Demolition
- Manufacturing of glass and metal products
- Plumbing
- Painting

CRYSTALLINE SILICA DUST

Silica dust particles can embed themselves in the alveolar sacs deep in the lungs where they cannot be cleared by mucous or coughing.

