

What's the hazard?

Each year more than 300 U.S. workers die from silicosis and thousands more are diagnosed with the lung disease. **It is frequently misdiagnosed, so actual numbers may be quite higher.**



Silica is a natural mineral that comes in several Crystalline forms, some more hazardous than others, such as:

- **Quartz**
- **Fused**
- **Tripoli**
- **Cristobolite**
- **Tridymite**



Crystalline silica dust is made up of a variety of particle sizes. Particle sizes small enough to reach the deep parts of the lungs are referred to as “respirable”, which are more likely to cause:

- ❌ "Silicosis", which is a scarring of the lung tissues,
- ❌ Lung cancer
- ❌ Chronic obstructive pulmonary (lung) disease (COPD)
- ❌ Decreased lung function
- ❌ Increased risk of getting tuberculosis

It's important people working with silica-containing materials understand:

- ! With lower exposures over longer periods of time it usually takes several years before you know that you have a problem.
- ! Higher exposures can produce health problems much sooner.
- ! At first, there can be no symptoms of disease, and then
 - o Shortness of breath.
 - o Chest pain
 - o Persistent dry coughing
 - o Loss of appetite and weight loss
 - o Extreme fatigue
 - o Fever
 - o Nails with a bluish tint

- ! Short of a lung transplant, silicosis cannot be cured. Doctors can only treat the symptoms to provide some comfort. It's best to minimize exposures now to prevent disability later in life.

The symptoms and other health affects listed above can be caused by other things besides exposure to silica. Make sure and get evaluated by a board certified occupational medicine physician.

Additional Sources of Information

- [NIOSH](#)
- [Washington State](#)
- [OSHA](#)