



Silicosis

What is silicosis?

Silicosis is an occupational respiratory disease most commonly associated with the mining, quarrying, construction, pottery and sandblasting industries. Silicosis is an incurable form of occupational lung disease which occurs by inhaling large amounts of silica dust, usually over a period of 20 years or more. Silica is a substance found in certain types of stone, clay, sand and rock.

There are three main types of silicosis:

- **Chronic silicosis** usually results from long-term exposure to low levels of silica dust, and is the most common type of the disease. It can take between 10 and 30 years (usually more than 20) for chronic silicosis to develop.
- **Accelerated silicosis** usually develops five to 10 years after short-term exposure to high levels of silica dusts. People who suffer from this type of silicosis may be prone to developing more severe symptoms in the future.
- **Acute silicosis** is the rarest type of the disease and sufferers will have usually been exposed to high concentrations of silica dust. Acute silicosis can develop just a few weeks after exposure, and in some cases can be fatal.



Signs and symptoms

Once silica dust particles are inhaled they can embed themselves in the lining of the lung, causing inflammation and scarring of the lungs and eventually damage which can stop the lungs from working properly.

Silicosis symptoms include:

- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Wheezing
- Swollen fingers



Diagnosis and treatment

If you think you have been exposed to silica dust and suffer from any of these symptoms, it is important to get checked out by your GP. An x-ray, CT scan or lung functioning test will help your doctor to establish whether you have silicosis.

Unfortunately there is currently no cure for silicosis, however there are treatments available to help relieve symptoms. Antibiotics and vaccinations may also be offered to help protect you from developing chest infections.

It is important to ensure that following your diagnosis you are not exposed to further silica dust. If you smoke you should also look to stop as smoking is likely to aggravate your condition.

Health and safety at work

Your employer is responsible for ensuring that you are not exposed to silica dust in the workplace. If you work in an environment where you may be exposed to silica dust, it is essential that your employer supplies you with the appropriate protective equipment and takes measures to reduce exposure to harmful particles.

If you believe you have developed silicosis as a result of your workplace then you may be entitled to make an industrial disease compensation claim.



Contact us

If you or someone you know has developed silicosis or any other industrial disease, call us for compensation claim advice on **0800 0 224 224** or visit our dedicated silicosis page: www.thompsons.law.co.uk/industrial-disease/silicosis