

What is the Silicosis Support Network?

The Silicosis Support Network was established in response to the increase in diagnosis of Silicosis, a preventable occupational lung disease. The Network is part of the Asbestos Disease Support Society which was established in 1992 to support sufferers of asbestos related diseases, their families and carers. The Society is a not-for-profit charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

Silicosis is the oldest of the pneumoconioses (dust diseases) and was thought to be almost obsolete in Australia until very recently. It is now appearing in increasingly large numbers of young people – mostly men (as young as 21 years), who are early in their working careers and often have dependent families.

How can the Silicosis Support Network assist you?

We work alongside industry experts, Government departments, industry representatives, unions and other interested stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes for our members. This experience has helped us to identify that sufferers of Silicosis will benefit from our support and services.

The Silicosis Support Network aims to create a community where we all work together to offer support to sufferers of Silicosis including their partners, loved ones and families, this support includes but is not limited to:

- Individual and Group Support
- Information & Resources
- Services & Referrals

For more information about support and services and how to access them please visit our website at:

www.silicosissupport.org.au

Daniel's Story

Daniel is 32 years old and after 15 years doing a job that he loved, he was diagnosed with complicated Silicosis and will never work as a stonemason again.



"Being a stonemason, that was my life, being with the boys, working hard but having a laugh too, that was my world, my identity, but that's all gone now...."

Daniel's passion is to help others affected by silicosis. He wants people affected in anyway by silicosis to have access



to the support and services they deserve. As a **mentor** with the Silicosis Support Network, Daniel shares his 'lived experience' to help us to offer exceptional supports and services. Daniel

is looking forward to connecting with you, sharing his experiences and hearing about yours.

To read more about Daniel's story, please go to www.silicosissupport.org.au

Silicosis Support Network

The Silicosis Support Network is a registered business name of the Asbestos Disease Support Society Limited

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ADSS is a not-for-profit charity registered with the ACNC.

We also have deductible gift recipient status whereby donations of \$2.00 or more are tax deductible.



Silicosis Support Network



What is Crystalline Silica and where is it used?

- Silica is a naturally occurring mineral that forms the major component of most rocks and soils. There are non-crystalline and crystalline forms.
- Crystalline silica is found in varying proportions in aggregates, mortar, concrete and stone and is used to make kitchen and bathroom benchtops, bricks, tiles and some plastics.
- Crystalline silica dust particles that are small enough to penetrate deep into the lung are termed respirable.
- Respirable crystalline silica may cause lung damage and disease.
- Typical leading industries include: Tunneling, foundries, stonemasonry, cement manufacture, power generation, brick and tile manufacture, ceramics, construction (including granite grinding and polishing), metal polishing, architectural abrasive blasting, quarries.

Typical concentrations of silica

Demolition Dust	3-4%
Shale	22%
Clay Bricks	15-27%
Aggregates in concrete	30%
Fibre cement bricks	10-30%
Granite	25-40%
Natural sandstone	67%
Composite (engineered or manufactured) stone	90%



What can Silica do?

- Prolonged inhalation with consistent exposure of respirable crystalline silica dust may cause a specific type of lung damage called Silicosis. Silicosis is a progressive, irreversible and incurable fibrotic pulmonary disease that is caused by the inhalation of respirable crystalline silica dust
- Development of dust related lung disease depends on several factors including the amount, how often and for how long a worker is exposed to silica containing dust
- Dust related lung disease occurs when the body is unable to breakdown or remove certain types of dust once it has entered the lower parts of the lungs
- Dust lodged in the lungs can cause chemical reactions in the lung tissue that results in tissue injury, an inflammatory process, scarring and ultimately reduces the body's ability to breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide
- This higher the amount of silica in a product or work process increases the risk of workers developing breathing problems and Silicosis.

Some of the diseases associated with Silicosis

- Chronic bronchitis
- Emphysema
- Lung cancer
- Kidney damage
- Scleroderma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Autoimmune diseases such as Rheumatoid Arthritis and Sarcoidosis may also have links to Silicosis

Diagnosis

The symptoms of Silicosis are similar to those of other occupational lung diseases, which can often make it difficult to diagnose. Silicosis is typically diagnosed by a chest X-ray and lung function test. CT scans and/or lung biopsies are sometimes required to assist with diagnosis. The results of these tests are then interpreted by experienced radiologists and respiratory specialists.

Treatment

When diagnosed with Silicosis, an individual is no longer able to return to work in an environment that further exposes them to silica dust particles that can potentially further compromise their health. Although there is no cure for Silicosis, there are various treatments for symptom management, please consult with your GP or specialist for further information.

Having a healthy lifestyle and exercising regularly is an important component of managing Silicosis.

Compensation claims

A person who has been diagnosed with silicosis can generally pursue a compensation claim for the condition and the associated disability. There are generally two types of claims available in Australia for conditions like silicosis – either a workers' compensation claim or a damages claim. Workers' compensation schemes are a no fault claim process. An injured worker simply needs to establish that they have been diagnosed with a work-related condition that is causing impairment to recover compensation. A claim for damages however involves establishing negligence of the other party. In Queensland, a person needs to lodge a claim for workers' compensation benefits with WorkCover Queensland within six months of diagnosis.

It is recommended that anyone who has been diagnosed with Silicosis should seek independent legal advice regarding their particular circumstances and their potential entitlements.

Silicosis Type	Time of Exposure	Features
Acute	Less than 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induced by short term exposure to very high levels of silica dust • Presents with severe shortness of breath and potential respiratory failure
Accelerated	3 – 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated with high intensity silica exposure. • Radiological and pathological features of both chronic and acute silicosis may be present. • Likely to be associated with a greater rate of disease progression than chronic silicosis.
Chronic	Over 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can exist as: • Simple silicosis: often asymptomatic with small, predominately upper lobe nodules less than 1cm in size. It may progress to complicated silicosis. In the early stages of the disease, small scars called nodules begin to form. • Complicated silicosis: (also known as progressive massive fibrosis (PMF): nodules conglomerate into masses greater than 1cm in size. As the condition progresses, lung function becomes impaired with development of severe shortness of breath and potential respiratory failure.