



SILICOSIS

Silicosis is caused when a person inhales silica dust, which leads to lung inflammation, scarring, and breathing difficulties. Silicosis can result in severe lung disease, kidney issues, cancer, and death. Disease onset depends on duration and exposure to the dust, with high levels speeding up development. Silicosis is irreversible and completely preventable with proper precautions.

WHAT CAN CAUSE SILICOSIS?

Artificial stone slabs are primarily comprised of the mineral quartz, which naturally contains high amounts of silica. As a result, these products typically contain more than 90% silica. This percentage is significantly higher than natural stone slabs like granite or marble. In California, LA County has seen the majority of silicosis cases originating from artificial stone fabrication shops where mandatory operating regulations are not being followed.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Workers cutting artificial stone countertops without proper respiratory protection are at high risk for silicosis due to the product's high silica content. Employers must provide workers tools to cut and fabricate material wet and safely, and adequate personal protective equipment such as respirators to limit exposure to silica dust.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The increase in popularity of artificial stone used for countertops is linked to an emerging health crisis among workers due to silica exposure, leading to silicosis. You can help by demanding safe practices from their contractors, and choosing low-silica content countertops. Once installed, artificial stone poses no health risk to consumers.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT OPTIONS?

In the early stages of silicosis there may be no symptoms.

As exposure to silica dust accumulates over time, this leads to lung damage and symptoms like coughing, breathlessness, chest pain, fatigue. Symptoms are often mistaken for other health conditions and may worsen over time even if the exposure to silica dust stops.

There is no cure for silicosis. It is a painful, degenerative disease that makes normal breathing very difficult. Doctors can treat symptoms to provide some comfort, such as oxygen therapy and inhalers, and in a few cases a lung transplant can potentially extend the patient's life.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Cal/OSHA at 833-579-0927 to connect with a live representative.

You can also visit: [worksafewithsilica.org](https://www.worksafewithsilica.org)

