

TUBERCULOSIS AND SILICOSIS



What You Need to Know

WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious infectious disease. TB germs typically affect the lungs; however, TB can affect other parts of the body, such as the kidneys, spine, or brain.

There are two types of TB: TB infection and TB disease. Both TB infection and TB disease can be treated with the right medicines.

TB Infection

TB infection is when TB germs are in the body but aren't active. People with TB infection have no symptoms, don't feel sick, and can't spread TB to others.

TB Disease

TB disease is when the TB bacteria attack the body. A person with active TB feels sick, has symptoms, and can spread TB to others.

WHAT IS SILICOSIS?

Silicosis is a permanent but preventable lung disease caused by breathing in silica dust found in cutting, grinding, or polishing materials such as stone, quartz, sand or cement. It can cause lung damage and breathing problems. There is no cure for silicosis.

In Los Angeles County, people who work with stone countertops or are exposed to silica dust are at risk for developing silicosis.

INHALING SILICA DUST CAN INCREASE YOUR RISK OF GETTING TB

Silicosis and tuberculosis (TB) are different diseases, but they can look very similar and are especially dangerous when a person has both at the same time. Both diseases damage the lungs. Silicosis happens when a person breathes in silica dust over time, often at work. The dust damages the lungs and weakens the body's ability to fight infections. Because of this, workers with silicosis are more likely to get TB. Having silicosis and TB disease at the same time is called silicotuberculosis.

SYMPTOMS COMMON TO BOTH TB AND SILICOSIS

- Persistent cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Extreme fatigue
- Weight loss

HOW TO PREVENT SILICOSIS

- Use tools that continuously release enough water when cutting stone to prevent silica dust from getting into the air.
- Wear the appropriate respirators for the tasks being performed.
- Never clean surfaces with compressed air or dry sweeping.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE EXPOSED TO SILICA DUST

- Inform your provider that you work in an environment where you cut or fabricate stone.
- Get linked to medical care so you can have a provider help you:
 - Get a TB test
 - Obtain a chest X-ray
- **Visit these helpful resources:**
 - 211 Los Angeles <https://211la.org/>
 - <https://worksafewithsilica.org/workers-rights#swp>

