



Silicosis Mental Health Resources

Silicosis is an occupational lung disease caused by inhaling respirable crystalline silica (RCS), generally over a long period. RCS is commonly referred to as silica dust. Inhaling silica dust causes lung inflammation, stiffening, and scarring. Over time, this can lead to difficulty breathing, and/or severe lung diseases.

Although preventable, there is currently no cure for silicosis. Even if you are no longer exposed to silica dust, this disease is irreversible and can continue progressing. If you work in construction, mining, stone fabrication, etc., you might be at high risk of exposure to silica dust.

It is important to speak to your healthcare provider if you are experiencing symptoms of silicosis:

- Persistent dry cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Weakness and extreme fatigue
- Other symptoms that may be mistaken for cold, flu, asthma, or COVID-19

Los Angeles County medical centers have seen a significant increase in workers presenting with silicosis. Many of those affected are Latino immigrant men with the majority being between 40-49 years old, with some as young as their late 20s.

Mental Health Impact

Living with a chronic condition such as impaired lung function is challenging. Silicosis and other lung-related diseases often provoke feelings of anxiety and depression. Additionally, shortness of breath caused by silicosis can spur anxiety, hyperventilation, and panic attacks. This is supported by research which found 99.1% of people with silicosis had anxiety symptoms and 86.1% had depression symptoms. Many people end up having to stay home from work more frequently, or quit work altogether, and abandon many hobbies they love.

It is normal to have distressing feelings after a silicosis diagnosis, people learning of their silicosis diagnosis can experience a wide range of difficult feelings, such as anxiety, depression, sadness, anger, and frustration. These feelings are very common, but with support, they can be managed.

Know that you are not alone. Seek help before these feelings worsen and impair daily function, compromise quality of life, and/or interfere with silicosis treatment. If these negative feelings become overwhelming or chronic, get help immediately.

In addition to severe or persistent negative emotions, additional signs of distress include:

- Lack of restful sleep.
- Constant fatigue or pain.
- Withdrawal from social interactions or enjoyable activities.
- Not eating well or exercising.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs to manage negative emotions.
- Worry about the future.

Finding Mental Health Support

If you or someone you know is living with or is being impacted by silicosis and are experiencing these or other mental health symptoms, do not hesitate to seek mental well-being support. This can include practicing self-care, talking to loved ones, engaging community resources, and bringing up these concerns with your healthcare team (primary doctor, nurse, and/or mental health professional).

Well-being resources and support available for those living with and impacted by silicosis:

- [Olive View Community Mental Health Urgent Care Center](#)
- [Los Angeles County Department of Public Health](#)
- [California Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [American Lung Association](#)

Additionally, you can call 211 or visit 211LA.org for linkage to support groups, supportive services, and other resources.

Additional mental health resources are also available through:

- [LACDMH's 24/7 Help Line](#) at (800) 854-7771
- The [iPrevail online well-being platform](#)
- Calling/texting [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
- Olive View Mental Health Center, (818) 485-0888
14238 Saranac Lane, Sylmar, CA 91342
- [Baila Network](#)
- [Chinatown Service Center](#), (213) 808-1700
767 N. Hill Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012