



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH **BEST PRACTICES**

——— *Working together to keep people working* ———

Respirable Crystalline Silica: Medical Surveillance and Tuberculosis

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Purpose of Medical Surveillance

- Identify adverse health effects...so that appropriate actions can be taken
- Determine if an employee has any condition...that might make him or her more sensitive to respirable crystalline silica exposure
- Determine the employee's fitness to use respirators

https://www.osha.gov/silica/Silica_FAQs_2016-3-22.pdf

Health effects of silica exposure

- Silicosis
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Lung cancer
- Kidney disease
- Latent TB infection → active TB disease

<https://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/factsheets/general/ltbiandactivetb.htm>

Latent TB Infection	Active TB Disease
Does not feel sick	Usually feels sick and may have symptoms such as coughing, fever, and weight loss
Cannot spread TB bacteria to others	May spread TB bacteria to others
Needs treatment for latent TB infection to prevent TB disease * * additional information at CDC site	Needs treatment to treat TB disease

Testing for Latent TB Infection: Initial vs. Periodic Exams

- Initial examination—requires testing for latent TB
- Periodic examinations—physician or other licensed health care professional (PLHCP) decides whether to test for latent TB infection

Purpose of TB tool

- Acknowledges not all providers routinely evaluate silica-exposed patients
- Makes it easier for providers to carry out their obligations under the rule
- Includes broader information on latent TB infection screening in Washington State
- Provides guidance: right worker, right test, right time
- The tool is an “adjunct to clinical evaluation”; does not “substitute for exercising sound clinical judgement”
- No additional sanctions can result from form being added to rule
- **Final decision rests with PLHCP**

Testing for Latent TB Infection: Initial vs. Periodic Exams

- Initial examination—requires testing for latent TB
 - Managing false positives
- Periodic examinations
 - Physician or other licensed health care professional (PLHCP) decides whether to test for latent TB infection
 - TB tool is an adjunct (right worker, right test, right time)—does not override PLHCP decision
 - PLHCP must assess TB risk, but **latent TB infection testing is only performed if PLHCP deems appropriate**

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