

# Information for medical practitioners

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## Silica-related health conditions in engineered stone workers

### Context

This document provides information for medical practitioners on the joint agency response to accelerated silicosis to support their investigation or treatment of patients who work with engineered stone and have been exposed to high levels of respirable crystalline silica (RCS, or silica dust).

### What is the Accelerated Silicosis Assessment Pathway and where do I find information on it?

WorkSafe New Zealand, ACC and Ministry of Health (Manatū Hauora) formed a joint agency response to accelerated silicosis in engineered stone workers in 2019. Health New Zealand (Te Whatu Ora) replaced the Ministry as a member of the joint agency response in 2024. A pathway to assess the health of eligible engineered stone workers was implemented in September 2020. Engineered stone is an artificially manufactured stone with high levels of crystalline silica (sometimes 90% or more) used mainly for kitchen and bathroom benchtops.

The Accelerated Silicosis Assessment Pathway enables engineered stone workers who meet the exposure threshold (worked directly with engineered stone for more than six months in the last 10 years) to have their health checked by a medical practitioner – typically a general practitioner.

The medical practitioner can lodge an ACC claim if at least some of the exposure occurred in a New Zealand workplace. An alternative pathway is available for workers whose exposure occurred outside New Zealand and who are eligible for public health care in this country.

You can find information on the Accelerated Silicosis Assessment Pathway [here](#). The general process is outlined [here](#) with detailed guidance for health practitioners on each step [here](#).

General practice teams, including general practitioners and practice nurses, can access information on how to refer eligible patients into the assessment pathway through a Silica Exposure HealthPathway.

### What should I do if a patient tells me that an engineered stone business is dry cutting engineered stone?

Dry cutting engineered stone without effective controls in place is an unacceptable practice. Please notify WorkSafe if you are aware of an engineered stone business that continues to dry cut engineered stone.

You can do that by submitting a [Raise a concern form](#) on the WorkSafe website.

A JOINT INITIATIVE DEVELOPED BY

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Mahi Hauru Aotearoa



He Kaupare. He Manaaki.  
He Whakaora.  
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**Health New Zealand**  
Te Whatu Ora

You should include:

- the words 'engineered stone' when you describe your concern (for example, worker dry cutting engineered stone)
- your name and contact details so WorkSafe can follow up with you if necessary
- the name and location of the business and (if known) their contact details
- the date the information was given to you.

WorkSafe does not need to know the name of the patient. However you should let the patient know that you intend to notify WorkSafe so there are no surprises for them if WorkSafe contacts their workplace.

## Do I need to notify anyone of a silica-related health condition in a patient?

Yes. You are required to notify a Medical Officer of Health if you find a person who is not admitted to a hospital with a health condition caused by exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS, or silica dust). This applies to any silica-related health condition not just silicosis. A person in charge of a hospital has a similar obligation to notify a Medical Officer of Health. The notification should be made through your usual notification channels to a Medical Officer of Health.

The Medical Officer of Health in turn is required to notify WorkSafe of that health condition. You should advise the Medical Officer of Health of the following to assist them with their notification obligation to WorkSafe:

- that you are notifying them under s143(2A) of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (respirable crystalline silica being a hazardous substance under that Act)
- the name of the person with the health condition
- the nature of the health condition, and
- that you believe the health condition arose from the patient's work.

## Further information

[Australian Government National guidance for doctors assessing workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica dust](#)

## THE LEGAL BASIS

The obligation for a medical practitioner to notify a Medical Officer of Health arises under [s143\(2A\) of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 \(HSNO\)](#).

### HSNO s143(2A)

*If a medical practitioner finds that a person who is not admitted to a hospital is suffering from an injury caused by a hazardous substance, the medical practitioner must give notice of the injury to the Medical Officer of Health.*

A person in charge of a hospital has a similar obligation.

### HSNO s143(2)

*If any person, upon admission to a hospital, is found to be suffering from any injury caused by a hazardous substance, the person for the time being in charge of the hospital shall give notice of the injury to the Medical Officer of Health.*

Crystalline silica (quartz) in the respirable form is a hazardous substance under the HSNO Act: [Approved hazardous substances with controls](#)

Silicosis and other silica-related health conditions are 'injuries caused by a hazardous substance' given they cause scarring or inflammation of the lungs or other physical harm or damage to the body.

In turn, the Medical Officer of Health is required to notify WorkSafe under [s199\(1\)\(b\) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 \(HSWA\)](#) if they reasonably believe the injury caused by the hazardous substance arises from work:

### HSWA s199(1)(b)

*This section applies if a medical officer of health receives – a notification under [section 143 of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996](#) of an injury caused by a hazardous substance that he or she reasonably believes arises from work.*

### HSWA s199(2)

*The medical officer of health must, as soon as practicable after receiving the notification:*  
*a. advise the regulator of the notification; and*  
*b. provide the regulator with the following information:*

- the name of the person who suffers or suffered from the... injury caused by the hazardous substance; and*
- the nature of the... injury.*

