

Black Lung



**U.S. Department of Labor
Mine Safety and Health Administration**

Health Hazard Information Card HH-39

Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis (CWP) and other lung diseases known as "black lung" are caused by breathing coal mine dust. Recent reports reveal some disturbing facts:

- New cases of CWP continue to occur, especially in younger miners
- CWP cases in experienced miners may be increasing
- Disabling CWP has been found in miners younger than 40

What You Should Know About Black Lung

- Black lung occurs after prolonged exposure to excessive amounts of respirable coal mine dust.
- Black lung includes:
 - Diseases that destroy lung tissue
 - Diseases that restrict movement of air
- Black lung can lead to permanent disability and death.
- Black lung affects both young and old miners.
- Black lung can progress after miners stop working.

What Are the Symptoms of Black Lung

- Early – possibly no symptoms at all.
- Later – difficulty breathing, especially with exercise; cough.
- Most severe – difficulty breathing, even at rest; waking up out of breath from sleep.

How to Find Out If You Have Black Lung

- Get a chest X-ray:
 - at the operator's expense when hired, and

- every five years thereafter
 - through your own doctor or a NIOSH X-ray van
- Visit your doctor or any black lung clinic for a breathing test and full evaluation if you have symptoms

How You Can Act Now to Protect Yourself from Black Lung

- **KNOW** and **USE** all dust controls specified in your mine's approved ventilation plan.
- **INSIST** that required control measures are maintained and in use.
- **BE SURE** that dust levels are being accurately monitored in your work area.
- **STAY AWAY** from areas with dust clouds.

--REMEMBER--

Black lung is NOT curable, but it is preventable!

If you have questions about coal mine health matters, please contact your local MSHA office or see the MSHA website at www.msha.gov.