

# Exercise with silicosis

Silicosis is an occupational dust-related disease which causes irreversible scarring (fibrosis) to the lungs. The degree of Silicosis can vary in severity - so much so that some individuals may not be aware of their diagnosis. Silicosis causes a manifestation of symptoms that impact on an individual's lung function, exercise/activity tolerance, quality of life and overall physical and emotional wellbeing.

## Exercise & whole-being

**Emotional Health:** Having a diagnosis such as Silicosis can negatively impact your respiratory health, your quality of life, and have a large influence on your emotional wellbeing. Some studies have shown that there is a higher prevalence of experiencing depression or anxiety symptoms in those with Silicosis. However, it is well established that routine exercise can significantly benefit mental illness management, improving psychological wellbeing through positive neurochemical changes.

**Fatigue & Activities of Daily Living (ADL):** A commonly reported symptom of Silicosis is high fatigue levels, which is a contributing factor to reduced ability to perform ADL. Several studies relating to other Respiratory conditions have demonstrated that those who participate in routine exercise have improved fatigue management and increased ability to perform more daily tasks. Pacing is a concept that will be discussed at length during your program; it is an evidence-based approach to gradually increase activity levels in a controlled manner and is designed to prevent 'boom and bust' patterns of activity.

## How does exercising with silicosis look?

Like any pulmonary rehabilitation program, your exercise or physical activity plan will be developed by an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP). The level and mode at which you exercise will be based on several factors, including your baseline respiratory health, your confidence to engage in physical activity and what goals you are striving to achieve. Most pulmonary rehabilitation programs include a combination of aerobic exercises, which can assist with walking tolerance, and resistance exercises which can build your overall strength.



## Why should I exercise with silicosis and/or poor respiratory health?

There is strong evidence that any individual with poor respiratory health should engage appropriately prescribed physical activity. Physical activity - in particular, pulmonary rehabilitation - has been shown to:

- ◆ Enhance lung capacity
- ◆ Enhance ability to engage in meaningful tasks, including Activities of Daily Living (ADL)
- ◆ Reduce hospitalisations
- ◆ Improve confidence in self-managing respiratory health
- ◆ Improve mood
- ◆ Improve Health-related Quality of Life
- ◆ Improve management of fatigue

Your AEP will educate you around different breathing techniques, which may assist in improving your exercise tolerance and managing shortness of breath. Two of these techniques are pursed lip and diaphragmatic breathing.

If your confidence to complete physical activity is low, an AEP can provide education, reassurance and support around how to take your first steps. Some tools they may use include a Pulse Oximeter (gives a reading of your Oxygen Saturation levels) and an Activity Diary (helps to schedule activity and manage your energy).

Participation in an individualised exercise program may assist you to perform ADL and more meaningful activities, which in turn will positively affect your physical and emotional wellbeing.