

What else might the X-ray examination tell me about my health?

In addition to providing an indication of whether or not you have pneumoconiosis, the X-ray examination may also reveal evidence of other medical disorders. Heart defects and the early stages of diseases such as tuberculosis and lung cancer can be detected through a chest X-ray.

Even if you think you are in perfect health it makes good sense to participate in the free chest X-ray program.

Will the results of my examination entitle me to black lung benefits?

Federal law specifies that a miner whose X-ray reveals complicated pneumoconiosis is entitled to benefits under the Black Lung Benefits Act. However, the benefits are administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, not NIOSH. You must apply to the Department of Labor for these benefits.

Can I help anyone else by participating in the free chest X-ray examination program?

If you receive a chest X-ray examination you will not just be protecting your own health. You will also be helping other miners.

The examination results help NIOSH answer important questions about the prevalence and severity of pneumoconiosis among coal workers. Through research, NIOSH hopes to better understand the disease and to prevent it. Your participation in the examination programs may help prevent needless suffering in future generations of miners.

For additional information contact:

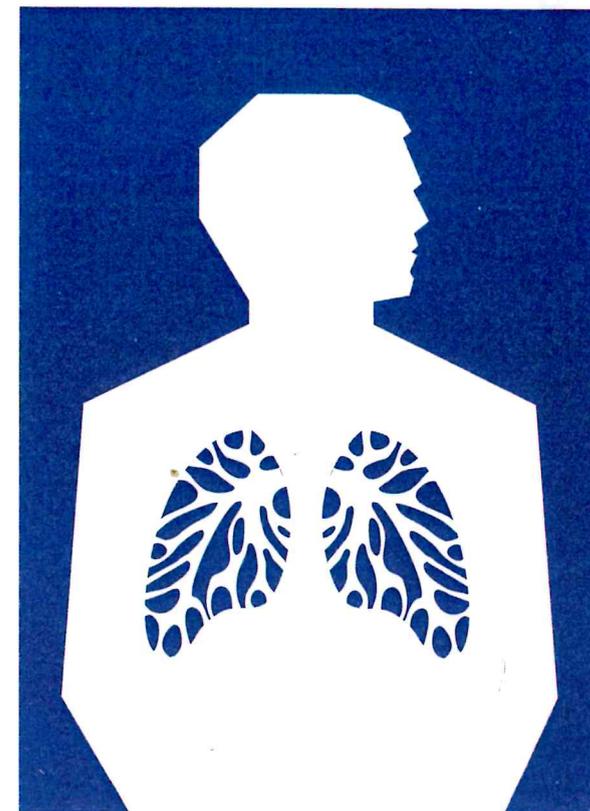
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NIOSH

Free
Chest X-rays
For Working
Underground
Coal Miners

QUESTIONS
AND
ANSWERS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control
National Institute for
Occupational Safety and Health

CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

The first priority and concern of all in the coal mining industry must be the health and safety of its most precious resource—the miner.

—The Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969

COAL WORKERS' PNEUMOCONIOSIS

Preventing coal workers' pneumoconiosis is among the highest priorities in protecting the health of the coal miner. It is an effort that requires the commitment of you, the miner, as well as the coal mine operator.

Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis is caused by inhaling coal mine dust. Although some miners never develop the disease, others may develop the early signs after less than 10 years of mining experience. According to recent studies by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), about one of every 20 miners studied has X-ray evidence of some pneumoconiosis.

Pneumoconiosis is not reversible. In its early stages, called simple pneumoconiosis, the disease will not prevent you from working or carrying on most normal activities. In some miners, the disease never becomes more severe.

In other miners, the disease progresses from simple to complicated pneumoconiosis, a condition also called progressive massive fibrosis. If you develop progressive massive fibrosis, you will be considered permanently disabled.

Federal laws require that mine dust levels be controlled to help prevent you from getting pneumoconiosis. The law also provides that if you have X-ray evidence of pneumoconiosis, you can be transferred to a less dusty area of the coal mine without loss of pay.

How can I know whether I have coal workers' pneumoconiosis?

Pneumoconiosis is diagnosed from chest X-rays. The Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 as amended by the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977 specifies that when you begin working in underground coal mining for the first time, you must be given a chest X-ray, either as part of a pre-employment physical examination or within six months after being hired. Three years later you must receive a second X-ray examination. If this second examination reveals evidence of pneumoconiosis, you must receive a third X-ray examination two years after the second. These are mandatory examinations.

You may also participate in voluntary examination programs. According to the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, all miners who began working in an underground coal mine before December 30, 1969, shall be provided the opportunity to have an examination approximately every five years during periods specified by NIOSH.

Miners who began working on or after December 30, 1969, and who have had the first two (or, if necessary, three) mandatory examinations are also eligible to participate in these voluntary examination programs.

Who pays for the X-ray?

X-ray examinations are paid for by the coal mine operator.

How can I find out where and when the voluntary examinations are to be given?

Each operator of an underground coal mine is required to post a proposed plan for chest X-ray examinations at the worksite of each operating underground coal mine. The plan, with a roster of names and addresses of mine employees, is also submitted to NIOSH for approval. After NIOSH has approved the plan, it is returned to the operator and must be continuously posted on the mine bulletin board. The posted plan will tell you where and when the X-ray examinations will be given. NIOSH will also contact you to explain the program and provide details of participation.

Who interprets the X-ray?

Your X-ray will be interpreted by a physician at the facility where the examination is administered.

It will then be sent to NIOSH and interpreted by at least one more physician who is an expert in classifying X-rays according to severity of pneumoconiosis.

The final determination will be that which is agreed upon by at least two physicians who have interpreted your X-ray independently.

To whom does NIOSH send the miner's medical report?

The law requires that NIOSH report the results of your examination to the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), U.S. Department of Labor. MSHA will then notify you of any rights or benefits you may have, based on the X-ray examination results.

No one else, including your physician, will be notified of the results without your written permission. The regulations prohibit the coal mine operator from soliciting a medical report on any miner.