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Dr. Morris Fishbein's Daily Health Service

MOST INDUSTRIAL DUST IS NOT INJURIOUS TO LUNGS OF WORKER

In a survey of the subject recently made, Dr. E. . Collis points out that most dusts in such concentrations as occur in industry do not exert an injurious influence on the lungs. Workers in leather, in the shoe industry and in milling are in contact constantly with the dusts associated with these working conditions, but are not often sick as a result.



Dr. Fishbein

There was a time when flour dust was held to be harmful. Later it was found that the illness was due to breaking off of quartzite from the millstones. The quartzite dust was the harmful factor rather than the flour dust. Today when flour is milled by steam rollers millers do not experience the same type of lung trouble.

Workers in limestone, marble, gypsum, and in cement do not suffer much from the dust they inhale, because these dusts are mostly calcium dusts and calcium is easily taken up and handled by the human system. There are, however, other dusts which are not easily taken up, such as those from basic slag and emery.

These dusts contain oxide of aluminum, which is not easily dissolved in the tissues and which therefore must be coughed up. Constant exposure to such dust causes repeated inflammations of the tissues of the lungs and a type of bronchitis which becomes chronic and serious. It is, of course, difficult to tell the difference between bronchitis caused by dusts and that which results from exposure at hot furnaces and that due to the fumes that arise in various industries, or indeed that due to severe climatic conditions.

Apparently the most harmful of all dusts is that developed in the industries using silica, particularly those associated with basalt and asbestos. The dust of asbestos acts in connection with the tissue of the lung to cause a thickening or fibrous condition of the lungs which goes on rapidly to a serious if not fatal condition.

Coal dust does not apparently produce any unusual mortality from respiratory disease. The lungs of miners are found to be simply black with coal dust and yet no serious disease of the lung has developed. If, however, the coal dust is combined with silica dust of the type that has been mentioned, the condition that develops may be extremely serious.

Dr. Fishbein is editor Journal of the American Medical Association, and of Hygeia, the Health Magazine.

Two Long Words

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