

What is **Asbestos**?

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring mineral fibers that have been used by different industries for their heat insulation, fire-stopping, electrical insulation, and sound absorption properties. Many building materials contained asbestos until the 1980s. Even though asbestos is no longer used in construction, it can still be found in older buildings.

How does asbestos exposure happen?

Asbestos exposure happens when asbestos-containing (natural or man-made) materials are disturbed and fibers are breathed in or ingested.

Who is at risk for asbestos exposure?

Anyone who has worked with or spent time around asbestos-containing materials is at risk for exposure. This can include people who work in:



Construction



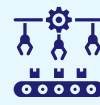
Infrastructure



Power Plants



Shipyards



Factories



Rescue

How can asbestos affect my health?

Asbestos-related lung damage happens when you breathe in asbestos fibers and they travel to parts of the lungs. These fibers can irritate the lungs, creating scar tissue in the lining of the lungs or inside the lungs.

Symptoms include shortness of breath with exertion (such as climbing stairs or carrying heavy objects), dry cough, wheezing, chest pain or tightness, and fatigue. Some people may have no symptoms at all.

Asbestos exposure has been linked to lung cancer, asbestosis (a type of lung disease), mesothelioma (cancer of the lining of the lung and abdominal cavity), gastrointestinal, ovarian, and throat cancers.

Smoking and asbestos exposure can greatly increase your chances of getting lung cancer. Quitting smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke are two important things you can do to help lower your risk.

How do I know if I have signs of asbestos exposure?

Chest X-rays or CT scans of the chest can show signs of asbestos-related lung damage. However, these signs take a long time to develop. It can take anywhere from 10 to 40 years after exposure to develop symptoms of asbestos-related lung disease.

Ways to reduce exposure:



Follow all rules and regulations to remove asbestos safely.

If clothing gets contaminated, remove it and mark it as contaminated.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Employers should provide fitted respiratory protection and other PPE to prevent contact with asbestos. If asbestos gets on your skin or in your eyes, wash right away.



Employee training. All employees who might be in contact with asbestos should receive proper training.

This information is intended for general reference only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice.

References:

- Asbestos and Your Health. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/about/
- About Asbestos. International Agency for Research on Cancer. World Health Organization.
asbest-study.iarc.who.int/about/about-asbestos/
- Health Effects of Asbestos. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/health-effects/index.html



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