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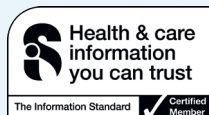
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# CONCERNED ABOUT ASBESTOS EXPOSURE

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## MESOTHELIOMA UK

Supporting People With This Asbestos Cancer



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### What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a natural occurring mineral. Its name derives from the Greek meaning 'inextinguishable' which suggests its ability to resist heat and fire that resulted in asbestos being used widely in industry, shipbuilding and construction. Many countries continue to produce and use asbestos.

There are three main types:-



Blue  
(Crocidolite)

Brown  
(Amosite)



White  
(Chrysotile)

They are all harmful but blue and brown asbestos are recognised as the most hazardous and have not been imported into the UK since 1985.

However, they are still present in buildings and equipment produced before the ban.

It is the dust and airborne fibres from asbestos, which cause harm when inhaled or ingested. Intact asbestos materials left undisturbed are thought to pose no significant threat.

There are four main diseases caused by exposure to asbestos fibres. These are:-

- asbestosis (a scarring of the lung tissue caused by asbestos)
- mesothelioma (a cancer of the lining of the lung)
- asbestos related lung cancer
- diffuse pleural thickening (a non-malignant disease affecting the lung lining)

### Workers at risk of asbestos exposure

Although the risks of asbestos exposure in relation to lung disease have been known for over 100 years, it was still widely used in many industries until the late 1970s and later to a lesser extent. Unfortunately, despite the known dangers many employers did not provide adequate protection or take measures to prevent exposure.

The following list of occupations is not a complete list and you may have worked in a different occupation and been exposed to asbestos.

- Carpenters and joiners
- Boiler, pipe and heating workers
- Shipbuilding/shipyard workers
- Navy seamen
- Dockworkers
- Ladders and sprayers
- Mechanics
- Plumbers and gasfitters
- Roofers
- Construction and demolition workers
- Painters and decorators
- Electricians
- Railway workers and coach construction
- Engineers
- Power station workers
- Laboratory and research
- Asbestos manufacture and sales
- Health workers
- School workers

Exposure is not limited to those who have worked directly with asbestos. Exposure can be para-occupational; that is asbestos being taken out of the workplace and perhaps into the home on the work clothes of someone working with asbestos. Exposure can also be environmental, for example living near an asbestos factory or in a building containing asbestos.

### Asbestos removal

Generally asbestos is more of a risk if you disturb or damage it and cause fibres to be released into the air. If asbestos containing materials are in good condition and in a position where they are not going to be disturbed or damaged it may be acceptable to leave them where they are and ensure that any risks are properly managed. Professional advice should be sought.

Asbestos was used in many different products and buildings from the 1950s to the mid 1980s.

If you are concerned about asbestos in the home and the potential removal of it, you should contact the Local Council in your area or the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA) - [www.arca.org.uk](http://www.arca.org.uk) telephone 01283 566467.

### Are you concerned about asbestos exposure?

If you have been exposed to asbestos at any time you are potentially at risk. However, the majority of people who have been exposed to asbestos dust do not suffer ill health as a result.

The period of time between exposure and the development of an asbestos related disease can be between 10 and 50 (or more years). There is no way of identifying who will go on to suffer health problems and who will remain unaffected.

### What should you do if you are worried about a previous exposure?

- **Remember** – the majority of people exposed to asbestos do not suffer health problems as a result
- **Be aware** of your own well-being and changes in your health
- **Contact your GP for advice** if you are concerned

If you are interested in asbestos and the diseases it causes please read our separate information booklet 'Asbestos and the Diseases it Causes'