



TOWN OF HARRISBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Asbestos in your Home: The Silent Killer

Asbestos is one of the most deadly killers in the home today, and unfortunately, there are thousands of people are in danger of breathing in asbestos. This is a problem that stems back many decades, to when using asbestos in manufacturing first became popular. If you live or work in an older structure, it is important to learn a bit about this substance and how to tell if you are living around it.

Although dangerous, asbestos is a natural substance. Luckily, you aren't simply going to find asbestos in the environment like you would find other common stones. Asbestos forms deep below the earth's surface and must be mined to use in manufacturing. Once in a manufacturing plant, this substance can take on a variety of looks. It was used for everything from insulation and fire-proofing materials to drywall and sheetrock to paint. In short, any material in your home could potentially contain asbestos.

The real problem with asbestos is the fibrous nature of this substance. Asbestos often looks like spun sugar or powder (although mixed with other substances, it can take a variety of appearances. Because of this texture, small fibers – microscopic and often invisible to the naked eye – fill the air whenever the asbestos is disturbed. It is kind of like punching a bag of flour. Particles fill the air, and they are easy to breathe in or, if your mouth is open, swallow.

When asbestos enters the body, the real problems start. These small, jagged fibers do a number on the soft tissue linings of your lungs, stomach, and heart. The body then tries to repair the tears and rid itself of asbestos fibers that have embedding into your body. Over time, scar tissue builds up. This can cause breathing problems, and, even more dangerous, cancer. When the scar tissue cells mutate, a cancer called mesothelioma begins to affect the body. Mesothelioma is extremely hard to treat and, in the end, most victims die from this cancer fairly quickly after diagnosis. For more resources on mesothelioma and mesothelioma cancers please visit www.asbestsos.com.

Unfortunately, asbestos can be quite hard to avoid. This substance is durable, flexible, strong, heat-resistant, and lightweight. Furthermore, asbestos was cheap, especially compared to other substances with the same qualities. Therefore, it was used everywhere. There are, however, steps you can take to avoid asbestos exposure. Try following these tips if you want to keep yourself and your family healthy:

- Find out your state health department and obtain a list of asbestos-related cases in your area.
- Before purchasing a home, have it inspected for asbestos. A professional can tell you if there is asbestos in the house and, if so, if it is still safe to occupy that house.
- If you believe that your home contains asbestos, ask for professional advice. Sometimes, allowing the asbestos-containing substances to remain is safer than trying to renovate.



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- If there is a plumbing or electrical problem, ask for help from professionals, and talk to them about your asbestos concerns. Old pipes and electrical line materials are a hot spot for asbestos.
- Never vacuum around asbestos. This will further cause the fibers to fill the air. The fibers are so small that they pass through traditional filters.

Again, asbestos can be found almost everywhere in a structure. Some of the most common places to find asbestos include in the following places: adhesives, insulation, cement, tiles, vinyl sheet flooring, furnace ducts, drywall, and ceiling tiles. Major corporations knew about asbestos since at least the 1930s. However, due to the qualities of this substance, these corporations conspired to hide the problems with asbestos like mesothelioma. Therefore, today's problems are the result of negligence by these companies that once used asbestos.

You have rights. It may not always be possible to avoid asbestos, or even to notice it in your home right away, but you do have legal options. It is important to be pro-active about your health. If you believe that you have been exposed to asbestos, see a doctor right away. Early diagnosis is the only way to survive and treat the problems stemming from asbestos exposure.

After you talk to a doctor, it is important to assert your legal rights. Many companies have already created funds in order to pay those who they have exposed to asbestos in the past. Remember, asbestos-related problems can take years and even decades to develop. So, problems from the mid-1900s can still be hurting you today.

The key is to always work with professionals. Hire a professional to test air quality and help you spot asbestos problems in your home. If anything is found, talk to a medical professional about your concerns. Lastly, make certain that you follow the advice of a legal professional. This will ensure that you do not fall victim to asbestos problems and that you'll get the money you need for removal and medical treatment.

If you have any other questions or concerns on asbestos exposure or its effects, please visit the comprehensive resources at the [Asbestos and Mesothelioma Center](#).