

ASBESTOS IN THE HOME

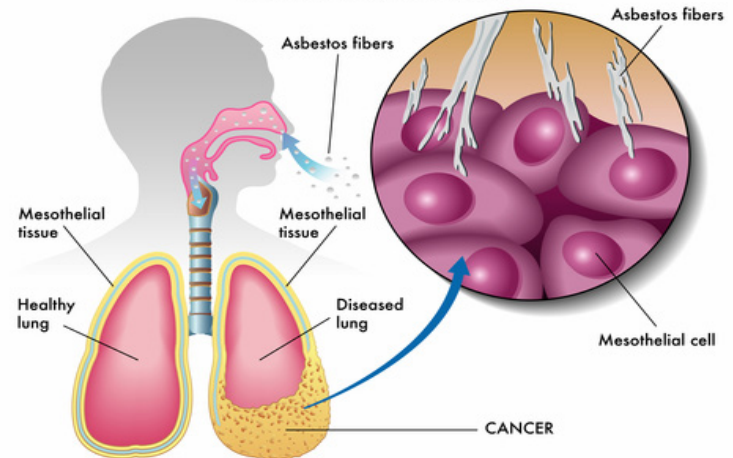
INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON THE DANGERS OF ASBESTOS IN THE HOME

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous mineral. Due to its fire resistance and strength it was incorporated into many building materials including roofing, cement siding, insulation (wall, ceiling, piping and heating and cooking equipment), flooring, mastics (glues), plaster, joint compound, textured paint and automotive breaks and clutches. The route of exposure that leads to the most severe health effects is inhalation. For this reason, if asbestos containing materials are in good condition, leave them in place and prevent them from becoming damaged to the point where they can release fibers into the air. To positively determine if a material contains asbestos it must be inspected under a microscope by a trained analyst.

REGULATIONS

The use of most asbestos containing materials was banned by the EPA and CPSC by 1977. These regulations define a material to be asbestos containing if it consists of more than 1% asbestos. While the EPA ban was mostly overturned, the CPSC rules remain in effect for products used in the home. Any asbestos containing products sold today, commercial or consumer, must be clearly marked to state its presence. NYS Industrial Code Rule 56, requires professionals that deal with asbestos to be trained and licensed to properly handle, dispose of asbestos and to properly to prevent the release of airborne fibers. There is an exception in these rules for owner occupied single family homes, where the owner performs the work. In any other building the work must be done by properly trained and licensed personnel.

Pleural Mesothelioma



HEALTH EFFECTS

The difficulty of asbestos health effects is that while they are severe, they are not easy to identify, because the fibers are microscopic, have no taste or smell, stay suspended in the air for a long time and are often attributed to other causes, like COPD. The diseases also have long latency periods, 15 to 30+ years, leading to a break between the exposure and the time the diseases are diagnosed. The primary health effects of asbestos involve the lungs and include asbestosis (fibrotic scarring of the lungs, often misdiagnosed as COPD), lung cancer and mesothelioma. Asbestos also works synergistically with cigarette smoking in causing lung cancer. Asbestos fibers may also migrate to other parts of the body and cause disease including the stomach, intestines and kidneys.

PREVENTION

The best ways to prevent asbestos diseases are:

- If your home or apartment was built before 1977, review it to see if any potential asbestos containing materials are present and monitor their condition.
- Protect confirmed asbestos containing materials by applying a protective coating (called encapsulation), or putting a protective covering over them (enclosure).
- If you are doing a renovation, improvement or replacing or repairing a system that may contain asbestos, verify the asbestos content of any suspected materials and either hire a licensed professional to remove them or follow the removal guidelines given by EPA.
- Clean any dust from any known or suspect materials using methods that limit dust generation like wet wiping or HEPA vacuuming.

New York State Child Day Care Regulations 416.3 (g) (h)

Toxic paints or finishes must not be used on room surfaces, furniture or any other equipment, materials or furnishings which may be used by children or are within their reach.

Peeling or damaged paint or plaster must be repaired (which could contain asbestos).

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