



How to Reduce Your Exposure to **ASBESTOS**

Because it is strong and resists heat, asbestos has been widely used in building materials since the late 1800s. Although asbestos mining in the United States halted in 1970, you can still be exposed to it in rocks and soil, building materials, and other products. Inhaling (breathing in) asbestos can cause health problems. **Learn about the sources of asbestos and follow the tips below to avoid asbestos exposure.**

Sources of Asbestos

Asbestos is made up of microscopic fibers that form naturally in certain types of rock. In outside settings, the fibers can be spread throughout soils and released into the air when disturbed by natural erosion and weathering, or human activities such as construction, grading, quarrying, and surface mining.

Although asbestos is no longer mined or processed in the United States, it is present in older manufactured products and still used in some materials. In buildings, asbestos fibers may be released into the air when materials containing asbestos are disturbed during product use, demolition and remodeling activities, building or home maintenance, and repair. Examples of materials containing asbestos include:

- Insulation (boilers, pipes, ducts, etc.)
- Fireproofing, sound proofing and textured ceilings
- Ceiling tiles
- Vinyl floor tiles and the backing on vinyl sheet flooring and adhesives
- Roofing materials and siding shingles/panels
- Textured paint and patching compounds used on walls and ceilings
- Heat-resistant fabrics

Health Effects of Asbestos Exposure

Not everyone exposed to asbestos will develop health problems. The likelihood of health effects from asbestos exposure depends on:

- How often you were exposed.
- How long you were exposed.
- How much you were exposed to.
- What risk factors you have (like smoking or pre-existing lung conditions).

Most people don't show signs or symptoms of asbestos-related health effects for several years or decades after exposure. The following conditions are major health problems associated with asbestos exposure:

- **Asbestosis** - Causes scarring of the lungs.
- **Pleural disease** - Causes thickening and hardening of the lining that covers the lungs and chest cavity.

- **Lung cancer** - Invades and blocks the lung's air passages.
- **Mesothelioma** - A rare cancer that occurs in the lining of the lungs and chest cavity.

Tips to Reduce Exposure to Asbestos

Asbestos is still present in older homes and buildings and some products. Unless it is labeled, you can't tell whether a material contains asbestos by simply looking at it. If in doubt, treat the material as if it contains asbestos or have a qualified professional sample and analyze it.

To protect yourself and your family from exposure:

- Do not touch or disturb any intact or damaged materials.
- Limit access to the area until an accredited inspector certifies that it is safe.
- Avoid dusting, sweeping, or vacuuming debris.
- Do not walk through material that may contain asbestos. Avoid tracking it through your home.
- Get an asbestos inspection from an accredited inspector before any major repairs, renovation, or demolition activities.
- Hire a Georgia-licensed asbestos removal company for safe removal of asbestos-containing materials during major repairs, renovation, or demolition activities.

Asbestos is also present in outdoor settings – in construction waste, soil, rocks, and former mining areas. To reduce exposure to asbestos outside:

- Hire a qualified professional if an area known or suspected to contain asbestos needs to be disturbed.
- Avoid digging, gardening, or recreational activities in soil and rock known or suspected to contain asbestos.
- Pave walkways or driveways that may have asbestos-containing soil and rock.

Resources

Georgia Environmental Protection Division
Lead-Based Paint and Asbestos Program
www.epd.georgia.gov/asbestos

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/asbestos

For More Information

Georgia Department of Public Health
Environmental Health Section
Chemical Hazards Program
(404) 657-6534
www.dph.georgia.gov/chemical-hazards

